THE SMUGGLER:

A Tale.

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AUTHOR OF

"DARNLEY," "DE L'ORME," "RICHELIEU,"

ETC. ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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DEDICATION.

TO

THE HON^{BLE} CHARLES EWAN LAW, M.P.

RECORDER OF LONDON,

ETC. ETC. ETC.

My dear Sir,

It would be almost superfluous to assure you of my esteem and regard; but feelings of personal friendship are rarely assigned as the sole motives of a dedication. The qualities, however, which command public respect, and the services which have secured it to you in so high a degree, must appear a sufficient motive for offering you this slight tribute, in the eyes not only of those who know and love you in the relations of private life, but of all the many

who have marked your career, either as a lawyer, alike eminent in learning and in eloquence, or as a just, impartial, clear-sighted, and yet merciful judge.

You will willingly accept the book, I know, for the sake of the author; though, perhaps, you may have neither time nor inclination to read it. Accept the dedication, also, I beg, as a sincere testimony of respect from one, who, having seen a good deal of the world, and studied mankind attentively, is not easily induced to reverence or won to regard.

When you look upon this page, it will probably call to your mind some very pleasant hours, which would doubtless have been as agreeable if I had not been there. As I write it, it brings up before my eyes many a various scene, of which you and yours were the embellishment and the light. At all events, such memories must be pleasant to us both; for

they refer to days almost without a shadow, when the magistrate and the legislator escaped from care and thought, and the laborious man of letters cast away his toil.

In the following pages, you will find more than one place depicted, as familiar to your remembrance as to mine; and if I have taken some liberties with a few localities, stolen a mile or two off certain distances, or deprived various hills and dales of their due proportions, these faults are of a species of petty larceny, on which I do not think you will pass a severe sentence, and I hope the public will imitate your lenity.

I trust that no very striking errors will meet your eye; for I believe I have given a correct picture of the state of society in this good county of Kent, as it existed some eighty or ninety years ago; and, in regard to the events, if you or any of my readers should be inclined

to exclaim—"This incident is not probable!" I have an answer ready, quite satisfactory to myself, whatever it may be to others; namely, that "the improbable incident" is true. All the more wild, stirring, and what may be called romantic parts of the tale, are not alone *founded* upon fact, but are facts; and the narrative owes me nothing more than a gown owes to a sempstress—namely, the mere sewing of it together with a very common-place needle and thread. In short, a few characters thrown in for relief, a little love, a good deal of landscape, and a few tiresome reflections, are all that I have added to a simple relation of transactions well known to many in this part of the country, as having actually happened, a generation or two ago. Amongst these recorded incidents, are the attack of Goudhurst Church by the smugglers, its defence by the peasantry, the pursuit, and

defeat of the free-traders of those days by the dragoons, the implication of some persons of great wealth in the most heinous parts of the transaction, the visit of Mowle, the officer, in disguise, to the meeting-place of his adversaries, his accidental detection by one of them, and the bold and daring manœuvre of the smuggler, Harding, as related near the close of the work. Another incident, but too sadly true—namely, the horrible deed by which some of the persons taking a chief part in the contraband trade, called down upon themselves the fierce enmity of the peasantry—I have but lightly touched upon, for reasons you will understand and appreciate. But it is some satisfaction to know that there were just judges in those days, as well as at present, and that the perpetrators of one of the most brutal crimes on record, suffered the punishment they so well merited.

Happily, my dear sir, a dedication, in these days, is no compliment; and therefore I can freely offer, and you receive it, as a true and simple expression of high respect and regard,

From yours faithfully,

G. P. R. JAMES.

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THE SMUGGLER.

CHAPTER I.

It is wonderful what improvements have taken place in clocks and watches during the last half-century; how accurately the escapements are constructed, how delicately the springs are formed, how easily the wheels move, and what good time they keep. After all, society is but a clock, a very complicated piece of mechanism; and it, too, has undergone, in many countries, the same improvements that have taken place in the little ticking machines that we put in our pockets, or those greater indicators of our progress towards eternity that we hang upon our walls. From the wooden clock, with its weight and catgut, to the exquisite chronometer which

varies only by a second or two in the course of the year, what a vast advance! and between even a period which many still living can remember, and that in which I now write, what a change has taken place in the machinery and organization of the land in which we dwell!

In the times which I am about to depict, though feudal ages were gone, though no proud barons ruled the country round from castle and stronghold, though the tumultuous times of the great rebellion had also passed away, and men in buff and bandolier no longer preached, or fought, or robbed, or tyrannized, under the name of law and liberty, though the times of the second Charles, and the second James, William and Mary, and good Queen Anne, falling collars, and hats and plumes, and floating wigs and broad-tailed coats, were all gone—bundled away into the great lumber-room of the Past—still, dear reader, there was a good deal of the wooden clock about the mechanism of society.

One of the parts in which rudeness of construction and coarseness of material were most apparent, was, in the Customs system of the

country, and in the impediments which it met with. The escapement was anything but fine. Now a days we do things delicately. If we wish to cheat the government, we forge Exchequer bills, or bribe landing-waiters and supervisors, or courteously insinuate to a superior officer that a thousand pounds is not too great a mark of gratitude for enabling us to pocket twenty thousand at the expense of the Customs. If we wish to cheat the public, there is chalk for our milk, grains of paradise for our beer, sago and old rags for our sugar, lime for our linen, and devils' dust to cover our backs. Chemistry and electricity, steam and galvanism, all lend their excellent aid to the cheat, the swindler, and the thief; and if a man is inclined to keep himself within respectable limits, and deceive himself and others at the same time, with perfect good faith and due decorum, are there not homœopathy, hydropathy, and mesmerism?

In the days I speak of, it was not so. There was a grander roughness and daringness about both our rogues and our theorists. None but a small villain would consent to be a

swindler. We had more robbers than cheats; and if a man chose to be an impostor, it was with all the dignity and decision of a Psalmanazor, or a bottle conjuror. Gunpowder and lead were the only chemical agents employed; a bludgeon was the animal magnetism most in vogue, and your senses and your person were attacked and knocked down upon the open road without having the heels of either delicately tripped up by some one you did not see.

Still this difference was more apparent in the system of smuggling than in anything else, and the whole plan, particulars, course of action and results were so completely opposed to anything that is, or can be in the present day—the scenes, the characters, the very localities have so totally changed, that it may be necessary to pause a moment before we go on to tell our tale, in order to give some sort of description of the state of the country bordering on the sea-coast, at the period to which I allude.

Scarcely any one of the maritime counties was, in those days, without its gang of smugglers; for if France was not opposite, Holland was not far off; and if brandy was not the object, nor silk,

nor wine, yet tea and cinnamon, and hollands, and various East India goods, were things duly estimated by the British public, especially when they could be obtained without the payment of Custom-House dues. But besides the inducements to smuggling, which the high price that those dues imposed upon certain articles, held out, it must be remembered that various other commodities were totally prohibited, and as an inevitable consequence, were desired and sought for more than any others. The nature of both man and woman, from the time of Adam and Eve down to the present day, has always been fond of forbidden fruit; and it mattered not a pin whether the goods were really better or worse, so that they were prohibited, men would risk their necks to get them. The system of prevention also was very inefficient, and a few scattered Custom-House officers, aided by a cruiser here or there upon the coast, had an excellent opportunity of getting their throats cut or their heads broken, or of making a decent livelihood by conniving at the transactions they were sent down to stop, as the peculiar temperament of

each individual might render such operations pleasant to him. Thus, to use one of the smugglers' own expressions—a *roaring* trade in contraband goods was going on along the whole British coast, with very little let or hindrance.

As there are land-sharks and water-sharks, so were there then (and so are there now) land-smugglers and water-smugglers. The latter brought the objects of their commerce, either from foreign countries or from foreign vessels, and landed them on the coast—and a bold, daring, reckless body of men they were; the former, in gangs, consisting frequently of many hundreds, generally well mounted and armed, conveyed the commodities so landed into the interior, and distributed them to others, who retailed them as occasion required. Nor were these gentry one whit less fearless, enterprising, and lawless than their brethren of the sea.

We have not yet done, however, with all the ramifications of this vast and magnificent league, for it extended itself, in the districts where it existed, to almost every class of society. Each tradesman smuggled or dealt in smuggled

goods; each public-house was supported by smugglers, and gave them in return every facility possible; each country gentleman on the coast dabbled a little in the interesting traffic; almost every magistrate shared in the proceeds or partook of the commodities. Scarcely a house but had its place of concealment, which would accommodate either kegs or bales, or human beings, as the case might be; and many streets in sea-port towns had private passages from one house to another, so that the gentleman inquired for by the officers at No. 1, was often walking quietly out of No. 20, while they were searching for him in vain. The back of one street had always excellent means of communication with the front of another; and the gardens gave exit to the country with as little delay as possible.

Of all counties, however, the most favoured by nature and by art for the very pleasant and exciting sport of smuggling, was the county of Kent; its geographical position, its local features, its variety of coast, all afforded it the greatest advantages; and the daring character

of the natives on the shores of the Channel was sure to turn those advantages to the purposes in question. Sussex, indeed, was not without its share of facilities, nor did the Sussex men fail to improve them ; but they were so much farther off from the opposite coast, that the commerce—which we may well call the regular trade—was, at Hastings, Rye, and Winchelsea, in no degree to be compared to that which was carried on from the North Foreland to Romney Hoy.

At one time, the fine level of "The Marsh," a dark night and a fair wind, afforded a delightful opportunity for landing a cargo and carrying it rapidly into the interior ; at another time, Sandwich Flats and Pevensey Bay presented a harbour of refuge, and a place of repose to kegs innumerable and bales of great value ; at another period, the cliffs round Folkestone and near the South Foreland, saw spirits travelling up by paths which seemed inaccessible to mortal foot ; and at another, the wild and broken ground at the back of Sandgate was traversed by long trains of horses, escorting or carrying every description of contraband articles.

The interior of the country was not less favourable to the traffic than the coast: large masses of wood, numerous gentlemen's parks, hills and dales tossed about in wild confusion; roads such as nothing but horses could travel, or men on foot, often constructed with felled trees or broad stones laid side by side; wide tracts of ground, partly copse and partly moor, called in that county "minnisses;" and a long extent of the Weald of Kent, through which no high way existed, and where such thing as coach or carriage was never seen,—offered the land smugglers opportunities of carrying on their transactions with the degree of secrecy and safety which no other county afforded. Their numbers, too, were so great, their boldness and violence so notorious, their powers of injuring or annoying so various, that even those who took no part in their operations were glad to connive at their proceedings, and at times to aid in concealing their persons or their goods. Not a park, not a wood, not a barn, did not at some period afford them a refuge when pursued, or become a depository for their commo-

dities, and many a man, on visiting his stable or his cart-shed early in the morning, found it tenanted by anything but horses or wagons. The churchyards were frequently crowded at night by other spirits than those of the dead, and not even the church was exempted from such visitations.

None of the people of the county took notice of, or opposed, these proceedings; the peasantry laughed at, or aided, and very often got a good day's work, or at all events a jug of genuine hollands from the friendly smugglers; the clerk and the sexton willingly aided and abetted, and opened the door of vault, or vestry, or church, for the reception of the passing goods; the clergyman shut his eyes, if he saw tubs or stone jars in his way; and it is remarkable what good brandy punch was generally to be found at the house of the village pastor. The magistrates of the county, when called upon to aid in pursuit of the smugglers, looked grave, and swore in constables very slowly; despatched servants on horseback, to see what was going on, and ordered the steward or the butler to "*send the sheep to the wood,*" an

intimation that was not lost upon those for whom it was intended. The magistrates and officers of seaport towns were in general so deeply implicated in the trade themselves, that smuggling had a fairer chance than the law, in any case that came before them, and never was a more hopeless enterprise undertaken, in ordinary circumstances, than that of convicting a smuggler, unless captured in flagrant delict.

Were it only our object to depict the habits and manners of these worthy people, we might take any given part of the seaward side of Kent that we chose for particular description; for it was all the same. No railroads had penetrated through the country then; no coast blockade was established; even martello-towers were unknown; and in the general confederacy or understanding which existed throughout the whole of the county, the officers found it nearly a useless task to attempt to execute their duty. Nevertheless, as it is a tale I have to tell, not a picture to paint, I may as well dwell for a few minutes upon the scene of the principal adventures about to be related. A long range of hills, varying greatly in height and steepness,

runs nearly down the centre of the county of Kent, throwing out spurs or buttresses in different directions, and sometimes leaving broad and beautiful valleys between. The origin or base, if we may so call it, of this range is the great Surrey chain of hills; not that it is perfectly connected with that chain, for in many places a separation is found, through which the Medway, the Stour, and several smaller rivers wind onward to the Thames or to the sea; but still the general connexion is sufficiently marked, and from Dover and Folkestone, by Chart, Lenham, Maidstone, and Westerham, on the one side, and Barham, Harbledown, and Rochester, on the other, the road runs generally over a long line of elevated ground, only dipping down here and there to visit some town or city of importance which has nested itself in one of the lateral valleys, or strayed out into the plain.

On the northern side of the county, a considerable extent of flat ground extends along the bank and estuary of the Thames from Greenwich to Sandwich and Deal. On the southern side, a still wider extent lies be-

tween the high-land and the borders of Sussex. This plain or valley, as perhaps it may be called, terminates at the sea by the renowned flat of Romney Marsh. Farther up, somewhat narrowing as it goes, it takes the name of the Weald of Kent, comprising some very rich land and a number of small villages, with one or two towns of no very great importance. This Weald of Kent is bordered all along by the southern side of the hilly range we have mentioned; but strange to say, although a very level piece of ground was to be had through this district, the high road perversely pursued its way up and down the hills, by Lenham and Charing, till it thought fit to descend to Ashford, and thence once more make its way to Folkestone. Thus a great part of the Weald of Kent was totally untravelled; and at one village of considerable size, which now hears almost hourly the panting and screaming steam-engine whirled by, along its iron course, I have myself seen the whole population of the place turn out to behold the wonderful phenomenon of a coach-and-four, the first that was ever beheld in the place. Close to the sea the hills are bare enough; but

at no great distance inland, they become rich in wood, and the Weald, whether arable or pasture, or hop-garden or orchard, is so divided into small fields by numerous hedgerows of fine trees, and so diversified by patches of woodland, that, seen at a little distance up the hill—not high enough to view it like a map—it assumes, in the leafy season, almost the look of a forest partially cleared.

Along the southern edge, then, of the hills we have mentioned, and in the plainer valley that stretches away from their feet, amongst the woods, and hedgerows, and villages, and parks which embellish that district, keeping generally in Kent, but sometimes trespassing a little upon the fair county of Sussex, lies the scene of the tale which is to follow, at a period when the high calling, or vocation, of smuggling was in its most palmy days. But ere I proceed to conduct the reader into the actual locality where the principal events here recorded really took place, I must pause for an instant in the capital, to introduce him to one or two travelling companions.

CHAPTER II.

It was in the grey of the morning—and very grey, indeed, the morning was, with much more black than white in the air, much more of night still remaining in the sky than of day appearing in the east—when, from the old Golden Cross, Charing Cross, or rather from the low and narrow archway which, at that time, gave exit from its yard into the open street exactly opposite the statue of King Charles, issued forth a vehicle which had not long lost the name of diligence, and assumed that of stage-coach. Do not let the reader delude himself into the belief that it was like the stage-coach of his own recollections in any other respect than in

having four wheels, and two doors, and windows. Let not fancy conjure up before him flat sides of a bright claret colour, and a neat boot as smooth and shining as a looking-glass, four bays, or browns, or greys, three-parts blood, and a coachman the pink of all propriety. Nothing of the kind was there. The vehicle was large and roomy, capable of containing within, at least, six travellers of large size. It was hung in a somewhat straggling manner upon its almost upright springs, and was elevated far above any necessary pitch. The top was decorated with round iron rails on either side; and multitudinous were the packages collected upon the space so enclosed; while a large cage-like instrument behind contained one or two travellers, and a quantity of parcels. The colour of the sides was yellow; but the numerous inscriptions which they bore in white characters left little of the ground-work to be seen; for the name of every place at which the coach stopped, was there written for the convenience of travellers who might desire to visit any town upon the road; so that each side

seemed more like a leaf out of a topographical dictionary of the county of Kent than anything else. Underneath the carriage was a large wicker basket, or cradle, also filled with trunk-mails, and various other contrivances for holding the goods and chattels of passengers; and the appearance of the whole was as lumbering and heavy as that of a hippopotamus. The coachman mounted on the box was a very different looking animal even from our friend Mr. Weller, though the inimitable portrait of that gentleman is now, alas, but a record of an extinct creature! However, as we have little to do with the driver of the coach, I shall not pause to give a long account of his dress or appearance; and, only noticing that the horses before him formed as rough and shambling a team of nags as ever were seen, shall proceed to speak of the travellers who occupied the interior of the vehicle.

Although, as we have seen, the coach would have conveniently contained six, it was now only tenanted by three persons. The first, who had entered at the Golden Cross, Charing Cross,

was a tall, thin, elderly gentleman, dressed with scrupulous care and neatness. His linen and his neckcloth were as white as snow, his shoes, his silk stockings, his coat, his waistcoat, and his breeches as black as jet; his hat was in the form of a Banbury cake; the buckles in his shoes, and at his knees, were large and resplendent; and a gold-headed cane was in his hand. To keep him from the cold, he had provided himself with a garment which would either serve for a cloak or a coat, as he might find agreeable, being extensive enough for the former, and having sleeves to enable it to answer the purpose of the latter. His hair and eyebrows were as white as driven snow, but his eyes were still keen, quick, and lively. His colour was high, his teeth were remarkably fine, and the expression of his countenance was both intelligent and benevolent, though there was a certain degree of quickness in the turn of the eyes, which, together with a sudden contraction of the brow when anything annoyed him, and a mobility of the lips, seemed to betoken a rather hasty and irascible spirit.

He had not been in the coach more than a

minute and a half,—but was beginning to look at a huge watch, which he drew from his fob, and to "pish" at the coachman for being a minute behind his time,—when he was joined by two other travellers of a very different appearance and age from himself. The one who entered first was a well-made, powerful man, who might be either six-and-twenty or two-and-thirty. He could not well be younger than the first of those two terms, for he had all the breadth and vigorous proportions of fully-developed manhood. He could not be well older than the latter, for not a trace of passing years, no wrinkle, no furrow, no greyness of hair, no loss of any youthful grace was apparent. Although covered by a large rough coat, then commonly called a wrap-rascal, of the coarsest materials and the rudest form, there was something in his demeanour and his look which at once denoted the gentleman. His hat, too, his gloves, and his boots, which were the only other parts of his dress that the loose coat we have mentioned suffered to be seen, were all not only good, but of the best quality. Though his complexion was dark,

and his skin bronzed almost to a mahogany colour by exposure to sun and wind, the features were all fine and regular, and the expression high toned, but somewhat grave, and even sad. He seated himself quietly in the corner of the coach, with his back to the horses; and folding his arms upon his broad chest, gazed out of the window with an abstracted look, though his eyes were turned towards a man with a lantern, who was handing something up to the coachman. Thus the old gentleman on the opposite side had a full view of his countenance; and seemed, by the gaze which he fixed upon it, to study it attentively.

The second of the two gentlemen I have mentioned entered immediately after the first, and was about the same age, but broader in make, and not quite so tall. He was dressed in the height of the mode of that day; and though not in uniform, bore about him several traces of military costume, which were, indeed, occasionally affected by the dapper shopmen of that period, when they rode up Rotten Row or walked the Mall, but which harmonized so well with his

whole appearance and demeanour, as to leave no doubt of their being justly assumed. His features were not particularly good, but far from ugly, his complexion fair, his hair strong and curly; and he would have passed rather for a handsome man than otherwise, had not a deep scar, as if from a sabre-wound, traversed his right cheek and part of his upper lip. His aspect was gay, lively, and good-humoured, and yet there were some strong lines of thought about his brow, with a slightly sarcastic turn of the muscles round the corner of his mouth and nostrils. On entering, he seated himself opposite the second traveller, but without speaking to him, so that the old gentleman who first tenanted the coach could not tell whether they came together or not; and the moment after they had entered, the door was closed, the clerk of the inn looked at the way-bill, the coachman bestowed two or three strokes of his heavy whip on the flanks of his dull cattle, and the lumbering machine moved heavily out, and rolled away towards Westminster Bridge.

The lights which were under the archway

had enabled the travellers to see each other's faces, but when once they had got into the street, the thickness of the air, and the greyness of the dawn, rendered everything indistinct, except the few scattered globe lamps which still remained blinking at the sides of the pavement. The old gentleman sunk back in his corner, wrapped his cloak about him for a nap, and was soon in the land of forgetfulness. His slumbers did not continue very long, however; and when he woke up at the Loompit Hill, he found the sky all rosy with the beams of the rising sun, the country air light and cheerful, and his two companions talking together in familiar tones. After rousing himself, and putting down the window, he passed about five minutes either in contemplating the hedges by the road-side, all glittering in the morning dew, or in considering the faces of his two fellow-travellers, and making up his mind as to their characters and qualities. At the end of that time, as they had now ceased speaking, he said—

"A beautiful day, gentlemen. I was sure it would be so when we set out."

The darker and the graver traveller made no reply, but the other smiled good-humouredly, and inquired—

"May I ask by what you judged, for to me the morning seemed to promise anything but fine weather?"

"Two things—two things, my dear sir," answered the gentleman in black. "An old proverb and a bad almanack."

"Indeed!" exclaimed the other. "I should have thought it a very good almanack if it told me to a certainty what sort of weather it would be."

"Ay, but how did it tell me?" rejoined the elderly traveller, leaning his hand upon the gold head of his cane. "It declared we should have torrents of rain. Now, sir, the world is composed of a great mass of fools with a small portion of sensible men, who, like a little quantity of yeast in a large quantity of dough, make the dumpling not quite so bad as it might be. Of all the fools that I ever met with, however, the worst are scientific fools, for they apply themselves to tell all the other fools in the world that of which they themselves know nothing, or

at all events very little, which is worse. I have examined carefully, in the course of a long life, how to deal with these gentry, and I find that if you believe the exact reverse of any information they give you, you will be right nine hundred and ninety-seven times out of a thousand. I made a regular calculation of it some years ago; and although at first sight it would seem that the chances are equal, that these men should be right or wrong, I found the result as I have stated, and have acted upon it ever since in perfect security. If they trusted to mere guess work, the chances might, perhaps, be equal, but they make such laborious endeavours to lead themselves wrong, and so studiously avoid everything that could lead them right, that the proportion is vastly against them."

"If such be their course of proceeding, the result will be naturally as you say," answered the gentleman to whom he spoke; "but I should think that as the variations of the weather must proceed from natural causes constantly recurring, observation and calculation might arrive at some certainty regarding them."

"Hold the sea in the hollow of your hand," cried the old gentleman, impatiently; "make the finite contain the infinite; put twenty thousand gallons into a pint pot,—and when you have done all that, then calculate the causes that produce rain to-day and wind to-morrow, or sunshine one day and clouds the next. Men say the same cause acting under the same circumstances will always produce the same effect—good; I grant that, merely for the sake of argument. But I contend that the same effect may be produced by a thousand causes or more. A man knocks you down; you fall: that's the effect produced by one cause; but a fit of apoplexy may make you fall exactly in the same way. Then apply the cause at the other end if you like, and trip your foot over a stone, or over some bunches of long grass that mischievous boys have tied across the path—down you come, just as if a quarrelsome companion had tapped you on the head. No, no, sir; the only way of ascertaining what the weather will be from one hour to another is by a barometer. That's not very sure, and the best I know of is a cow's tail, or a

piece of dried sea-weed. But these men of science, they do nothing but go out mare's-nesting from morning till night, and a precious number of horses' eggs they have found!"

Thus commenced a conversation which lasted for some time, and in which the younger traveller seemed to find some amusement, plainly perceiving, what the reader has already discovered, that his elderly companion was an oddity. The other tenant of the coach made no observation, but remained with his arms folded on his chest, sometimes looking out of the window, sometimes gazing down at his own knee in deep thought. About ten miles from town, the coach passed some led horses, with the grooms that were conducting them; and, as is natural for young men, both the old gentleman's fellow-travellers put their heads to the window, and examined the animals with a scrutinizing eye.

"Fine creatures, fine creatures—horses!" said the gentleman in black.

"Those are very fine ones," answered the graver of the two young men; "I think I never saw better points about any beast than that black charger."

"Ay, sir; you are a judge of horse-flesh, I suppose," rejoined the old gentleman; "but I was speaking of horses in the abstract. They are noble creatures indeed; and as matters have fallen out in this world, I can't help thinking that there is a very bad arrangement, and that those at the top of the tree should be a good way down. If all creatures had their rights, man would not be the cock of the walk, as he is now—a feeble, vain, self-sufficient, sensual monkey, who has no farther advantages over other apes than being able to speak and cook his dinner."

"May I ask," inquired the livelier of the two young men, "what is the gentlemanly beast you would put over his head?"

"A great many—a great many," replied the other. "Dogs, horses—elephants, certainly; I think elephants at the top. I am not sure how I would class lions and tigers, who decidedly have one advantage over man, that of being stronger and nobler beasts of prey. He is only at the head of the tribe Simia, and should be described by naturalists as the largest, cunningest, and most gluttonous of baboons."

The gay traveller laughed aloud; and even his

grave companion smiled, saying, drily, "On my life, I believe there's some truth in it."

"Truth, sir!" exclaimed the old gentleman. "It's as true as we are living. How dare man compare himself to a dog? an animal with greater sagacity, stronger affections, infinitely more honour and honesty, a longer memory, and a truer heart. I would not be a man if I could be a dog, I can assure you."

"Many a man leads the life of a dog," said the gay traveller. "I'm sure I have, for the last five or six years."

"If you have led as honest a life, sir," rejoined the old man, "you may be very proud of it."

What the other would have answered cannot be told, for at that moment the coach stopped to change horses, which was an operation, in those days, occupying about a quarter of an hour, and the whole party got out and went into the little inn to obtain some breakfast; for between London and Folkestone, which was to be the ultimate resting-place of the vehicle, two hours and a half, upon the whole, were consumed with

breakfast, dinner, tea, and supper. Thus any party of travellers proceeding together throughout the entire journey, had a much better opportunity of becoming thoroughly acquainted with each other than many a man has before marriage with the wife he takes to his bosom.

Though the conversation of the old gentleman was, as the reader has perceived, somewhat morose and misanthropical, he showed himself very polite and courteous at the breakfast table, made the tea, carved the ham, and asked every man if he took cream and sugar. What wonderful things little attentions are—how they smooth down our asperities and soften us to one another! The two younger gentlemen had looked upon their elderly companion merely as that curious compound which we have before mentioned—an oddity, and which, like a pinch of strong snuff, stimulates us without being very pleasant; but now they began to think him a very nice old gentleman; and even the graver of the pair conversed with him almost cheerfully for the short space of time their meal occupied. When they had finished, and paid the score,

the whole party walked out together to the front of the house, where they found a poor beggar woman with a child in her arms. Each gave her something, but the elderly man stopped to inquire farther, and the others walked up and down for a few minutes, till the coachman, who was making himself comfortable by the absorption of his breakfast, and the horses, who were undergoing the opposite process in the application of their harness, at length made their appearance. The two younger gentlemen turned their eyes from time to time, as they walked, to their elderly friend, who seemed to be scolding the poor woman most vehemently. His keen black eyes sparkled, his brow contracted, he spoke with great volubility, and demonstrated somewhat largely with the forefinger of his right hand. What were their internal comments upon this conduct did not appear; but both were a good deal surprised to see him, in the end, put his hand into his breeches pocket, draw forth a piece of money—it was not silver for it was yellow, and it was not copper for it was too bright—and slip it quietly into the

poor woman's palm. He next gave a quiet, almost a timid glance around, to see if any one were looking, and then stepped rapidly into the coach, as if he were ashamed of what he had done. During all this proceeding he had taken no notice of his two companions, nor at all listened to what they were talking of; but as they entered the vehicle, while the horses were being put to, the one said to the other, "I think you had better do so, a great deal. It is as well to have the *carte du pays* before one commences operations."

"Well," replied the other, "you take the lead, Edward. The wound is still painful, though it is an old one."

What they were talking of their companion could not tell; but it excited, in some degree, his curiosity; and the manners of his two companions had, to say the truth, pleased him, though he was one of those men who, with very benevolent feelings at the bottom, are but little inclined to acknowledge that they are well pleased with any thing or with any body. For a moment or two all parties were silent; but the

elderly gentleman was the first to begin, saying, in a more placable and complimentary tone than he was in general accustomed to use, "I hope I am to have the pleasure of your society, gentlemen, to the end of my journey?"

"I rather think we shall be your companions as far as you go," replied the gayer of the two young men, "for we are wending down to the far, wild parts of Kent; and it is probable you will not go beyond Folkestone, unless, indeed, you are about to cross the seas."

"Not I," exclaimed the old gentleman—"I have crossed the seas enough in my day, and never intend to set my foot out of my own country again, till four stout fellows carry me to the churchyard. No, no; you'll journey beyond me, a long way, for I am only going to a little place called Harbourne, some distance on the Sussex side of Folkestone—a place quite out of the world, with no bigger a town near it than Cranbrook, and where we see the face of a human creature above the rank of a farmer, or a smuggler, about once in the year,—always excepting the parson of the parish."

"Then you turn off from Maidstone?" said the graver traveller, looking steadfastly in his face.

"No, I don't," replied the other. "Never, my dear sir, come to conclusions where you don't know the premises. I go, on the contrary, to Ashford, where I intend to sleep. I am there to be joined by a worthy brother of mine, and then we return together to Cranbrook. You are quite right, indeed, that my best and straightest road would be, as you say, from Maidstone; but we can't always take the straightest road in this world, though young men think they can, and old men only learn too late that they cannot."

"I have good reason to know the fact," said the gayer of his two fellow travellers; "I myself am going to the very same part of the country you mention, but have to proceed still farther out of my way; for I must visit Hythe and Folkestone first."

"Indeed, indeed!" exclaimed their elderly friend. "Do you know any body in that part of Kent? — Have you ever been there before?"

"Never," replied the other; "nor have I ever seen the persons I am going to see. What sort of a country is it?"

"Bless the young man's life!" exclaimed the gentleman in black, "does he expect me to give him a long picturesque description of St. Augustine's Lathe? If you wish to know my opinion of it, it is as wild and desolate a part of the world as the backwoods of America, and the people little better than American savages. You 'll find plenty of trees, a few villages, some farm-houses, one or two gentlemen's seats—they had better have called them stools—a stream or two, a number of hills and things of that kind; and your humble servant, who would be very happy to see you, if you are not a smuggler, and are coming to that part of the country."

"I shall not fail to pay my respects to you," replied the gentleman to whom he spoke; "but I must first know who I am to inquire for."

"Pay your respect where it is due, my dear sir," rejoined the other. "You can't tell a whit whether I deserve any respect or not. You 'll

find out all that by and by. As to what I am called, I could give you half a dozen names. Some people call me the Bear, some people the Nabob, some the Misanthrope; but my real name—that which I am known by at the post-office—is Mr. Zachary Croyland, brother of the man who has Harbourne House: a younger brother too, by God's blessing — and a great blessing it is."

"It is lucky when every man is pleased with his situation," answered his young acquaintance. "Most elder brothers thank God for making them such, and I have often had cause to do the same."

"It's the greatest misfortune that can happen to a man," exclaimed the old gentleman, eagerly. "What are elder brothers, but people who are placed by fate in the most desperate and difficult circumstances. Spoilt and indulged in their infancy, taught to be vain and idle and conceited from the cradle, deprived of every inducement to the exertion of mind, corrupted by having always their own way, sheltered from all the friendly buffets of the world, and left, like a

pond in a gravel pit, to stagnate or evaporate without stirring. Nine times out of ten from mere inanition they fall into every sort of vice; forget that they have duties as well as privileges, think that the slice of the world that has been given to them is entirely at their own pleasure and disposal, spend their fortunes, encumber their estates, bully their wives and their servants, indulge their eldest son till he is just such a piece of unkneaded dough as themselves, kick out their younger sons into the world without a farthing, and break their daughters' hearts by forcing them to marry men they hate. That's what elder brothers are made for; and to be one, I say again, is the greatest curse that can fall upon a man. But come, now I have told you my name, tell me yours. That's but a fair exchange you know, and no robbery, and I hate going on calling people 'sir' for ever."

"Quite a just demand," replied the gentleman whom he addressed, "and you shall immediately have the whole particulars. My name is Digby, a poor major in his Majesty's —— regiment of Dragoons, to whom the two serious misfortunes

have happened of being born an eldest son, and having a baronetcy thrust upon him."

"Couldn't be worse—couldn't be worse!" replied the old gentleman, laughing. "And so you are Sir Edward Digby! Oh yes, I can tell you, you are expected, and have been so these three weeks. The whole matter's laid out for you in every house in the country. You are to marry every unmarried woman in the hundred. The young men expect you to do nothing but hunt foxes, course hares, and shoot partridges from morning till night; and the old men have made up their minds that you shall drink port, claret, or madeira, as the case may be, from night till morning. I pity you—upon my life, I pity you. What between love and wine and field sports, you'll have a miserable time of it! Take care how you speak a single word to any single woman! Don't even smile upon Aunt Barbara, or she'll make you a low curtsey, and say 'You must ask my brother about the settlement, my dear Edward.' Ha, ha, ha!" and he laughed a long, merry, hearty peal, that made the rumbling vehicle echo again. Then putting the gold-headed cane to his lips, he turned a sly glance

upon the other traveller, who was only moved to a very faint smile by all the old gentleman's merriment, asking, "Does this gentleman come with you?—Are you to be made a martyr of too, sir? Are you to be set running after foxes all day, like a tiger on horseback, and to have sheep's eyes cast at you all the evening, like a man in the pillory pelted with eggs? Are you bound to imbibe a butt of claret in three weeks? Poor young men—poor young men! My bowels of compassion yearn towards you."

"I shall fortunately escape all such perils," replied he whom he had last addressed—"I have no invitation to that part of the country."

"Come, then, I'll give you one," said the old gentleman; "if you like to come and stay a few days with an old bachelor, who will neither make you drunk nor make you foolish, I shall be glad to see you."

"I am not very likely to get drunk," answered the other, "as an old wound compels me to be a water drinker. Foolish enough I may be, and may have been; but, I am sure, that evil would not be increased by frequenting your society, my dear sir."

"I don't know—I don't know, young gentleman," said Mr. Croyland: "every man has his follies, and I amongst the rest as goodly a bag-full as one could well desire. But you have not given me an answer; shall I see you? Will you come with your friend, and take up your abode at a single man's house, while Sir Edward goes and charms the ladies."

"I cannot come with him, I am afraid," replied the young gentleman, "for I must remain with the regiment some time; but I will willingly accept your invitation, and join him in a week or two."

"Oh you're in the same regiment, are you?" asked Mr. Croyland; "it's not a whole regiment of elder sons, I hope?"

"Oh no," answered the other, "I have the still greater misfortune of being an only son; and the greater one still, of being an orphan."

"And may I know your style and denomination?" said Mr. Croyland.

"Oh, Osborn, Osborn!" cried Sir Edward Digby, before his friend could speak, "Captain Osborn of the —— Dragoons."

"I will put that down in my note-book," rejoined the old gentleman. "The best friend I ever had was named Osborn. He couldn't be your father, though, for he had no children, poor fellow! and was never married, which was the only blessing Heaven ever granted him, except a good heart and a well-regulated mind. His sister married my old schoolfellow, Layton —but that's a bad story, and a sad story, though now it s an old story, too."

"Indeed!" said Sir Edward Digby; "I'm fond of old stories if they are good ones."

"But, I told you this was a bad one, Sir Ned," rejoined the old gentleman sharply; "and as my brother behaved very ill to poor Layton, the less we say of it the better. The truth is," he continued, for he was one of those who always refuse to tell a story, and tell it after all, "Layton was rector of a living which was in my brother's gift. He was only to hold it, however, till my youngest nephew was of age to take it; but when the boy died—as they both did sooner or later—Layton held the living on, and thought it was his own, till one day there came a quarrel between him and my brother,

and then Robert brought forward his letter promising to resign when called upon, and drove him out. I wasn't here then; but I have heard all about it since, and a bad affair it was. It should not have happened if I had been here, for Bob has a shrewd eye to the nabob's money, as well he may, seeing that he's——but that's no business of mine. If he chooses to dribble through his fortune, Heaven knows how, I've nothing to do with it! The two poor girls will suffer."

"What, your brother has two fair daughters then, has he?" demanded Sir Edward Digby. "I suppose it is under the artillery of their glances I am first to pass; for, doubtless, you know I am going to your brother's."

"Oh, yes, I know—I know all about it!" replied Mr. Croyland. "They tell me everything as in duty bound—that's to say, everything they don't wish to conceal. But I'm consulted like an oracle upon all things unimportant; for he that was kicked out with a sixpence into the wide world, has grown a wonderful great man since the sixpence has multiplied itself. As to your having to pass under the artillery of the

girls' glances, however, you must take care of yourself; for you might stand a less dangerous fire, I can tell you, even in a field of battle. But I'll give you one warning for your safeguard. You may make love to little Zara as long as you like—think of the fools calling her Zara! Though she'll play a pretty game of picquet with you, you may chance to win it; but you must not dangle after Edith, or you will burn your fingers. She'll not have you, if you were twenty baronets, and twenty majors of Dragoons into the bargain. She has got some of the fancies of the old uncle about her, and is determined to die an old maid, I can see."

"Oh, the difficulty of the enterprise would only be a soldier's reason for undertaking it!" said Sir Edward Digby.

"It wont do—it wont do;" answered Mr. Croyland, laughing; "you may think yourself very captivating, very conquering, quite a look-and-die man, as all you people in red jackets fancy yourselves, but it will be all lost labour with Edith, I can tell you."

"You excite all the martial ardour in my

soul!" exclaimed Digby, with a gay smile; "and if she be not forty, hump-backed, or one eyed, by the fates you shall see what you shall see."

"Forty!" cried Mr. Croyland; "why she's but two-and-twenty, man!—a great deal straighter than that crouching wench in white marble they call the 'Venus de Medici,' and with a pair of eyes, that, on my life, I think would have made me forswear celibacy, if I had found such looking at me, any time before I reached fifty!"

"Do you hear that, Osborn?" cried Sir Edward Digby. "Here's a fine field for an adventurous spirit. I shall have the start of you, my friend; and in the wilds of Kent, what may not be done in ten days or a fortnight?"

His companion only answered by a melancholy smile; and the conversation went on between the old gentleman and the young baronet till they reached the small town of Lenham, where they stopped again to dine. There, however, Mr. Croyland drew Sir Edward Digby aside, and inquired in a low tone, "Is your friend in love?—He looks mighty melancholy."

"I believe he is," replied Digby. "Love's the

only thing that can make a man melancholy; and when one comes to consider all the attractions of a squaw of the Chippeway Indians, it is no wonder that my friend is in such a hopeless case."

The old gentleman poked him with his finger, and shook his head with a laugh, saying—"You are a wag, young gentleman—you are a wag; but it would be a great deal more reasonable, let me tell you, to fall in love with a Chippeway squaw, in her feathers and wampam, than with one of these made-up madams, all paint and satin, and tawdry bits of embroidery. In the one case you might know something of what your love is like; in the other, I defy you to know anything about her; and, nine times out of ten, what a man marries is little better than a bale of tow and whalebone, covered over with the excrement of a silkworm. Man's a strange animal; and one of the strangest of all his proceedings is, that of covering up his own natural skin with all manner of contrivances derived from every bird, beast, fish, and vegetable, that happens to come in his way. If he wants warmth, he goes and

robs a sheep of its great coat; he beats the unfortunate grass of the field, till he leaves nothing but shreds, to make himself a shirt; he skins a beaver, to cover his head; and, if he wants to be exceedingly fine, he pulls the tail of an ostrich, and sticks the feather in his hat. He's the universal mountebank, depend upon it, playing his antics for the amusement of creation, and leaving nothing half so ridiculous as himself."

Thus saying, he turned round again, and joined Captain Osborn, in whom, perhaps, he took a greater interest than even in his livelier companion. It might be that the associations called up by the name were pleasant to him, or it might be that there was something in his face that interested him, for certainly that face was one which seemed to become each moment more handsome as one grew familiar with it.

When, after dinner, they re-entered the vehicle, and rolled away once more along the high road, Captain Osborn took a greater share in the conversation than he had previously done; and remarking that Mr. Croyland had put, as a condition, upon his invitation to Sir Edward, that

he should not be a smuggler, he went on to observe, "You seem to have a great objection to those gentry, my dear sir; and yet I understand your county is full of them."

"Full of them!" exclaimed Mr. Croyland—"it is running over with them. They drop down into Sussex, out into Essex, over into Surrey; the vermin are more numerous than rats in an old barn. Not that, when a fellow is poor, and wants money, and can get it by no other means,—not that I think very hard of him when he takes to a life of risk and adventure, where his neck is not worth sixpence, and his gain is bought by the sweat of his brow. But your gentleman smuggler is my abomination—your fellow that risks little but an exchequer process, and gains ten times what the others do, without their labour or their danger. Give me your bold, brave fellow, who declares war and fights it out. There's some spirit in him."

"Gentlemen smugglers!" said Osborn; "that seems to me to be a strange sort of anomaly. I was not aware that there were such things."

"Pooh! the country is full of them," cried

Mr. Croyland. "It is not here that the peasant treads upon the kybe of the peer; but the smuggler treads upon the country gentlemen. Many a merchant who never made a hundred pounds by fair trade, makes thousands and hundreds of thousands by cheating the Customs. There is not a man in this part of the country who does not dabble in the traffic more or less. I've no doubt all my brandied cherries are steeped in stuff that never paid duty; and if you don't smuggle yourself, your servants do it for you. But I'll tell you all about it," and he proceeded to give them a true and faithful exposition of the state of the county, agreeing in all respects with that which has been furnished to the reader in the first chapter of this tale.

His statement and the various conversation, which arose from different parts of it, occupied the time fully, till the coach, as it was growing dark, rolled into Ashford. There Mr. Croyland quitted his two companions, shaking them each by the hand with right good will; and they pursued their onward course to Hythe and Folkestone, without any farther incident worthy of notice.

CHAPTER III.

At Hythe, to make use of a very extraordinary though not uncommon expression, the coach stopped to sup—not that the coach itself ate anything, for, on the contrary, it disgorged that which it had already taken in; but the travellers who descended from it were furnished with supper, although the distance to Folkestone might very well have justified them in going on to the end of their journey without any other pabulum than that which they had already received. But two or three things are to be taken into consideration. The distance from London to Folkestone is now seventy-one miles. It was longer in those days by several more, besides having the disadvantage of running up and down over innumerable hills, all of which were a great deal

more steep than they are in the present day. The journey, which the travellers accomplished, was generally considered a feat both of difficulty and danger, and the coach which performed that feat in one day, was supposed to deserve right well the name which it had assumed, of "The Phenomenon." Before it began to run, seventy-one miles in seventeen hours was considered an impracticable journey for anything but a man on horseback, and when first the coach appeared upon the road, the towns-people and villagers turned out in multitudes, with admiration and wonder, not unmixed with dread, to see the rapid rate at which it went—very nearly six miles an hour! The old diligence, which had preceded it, had slept one night, and sometimes two, upon the road; and, in its first vain struggles with its more rapid successor, it had actually once or twice made the journey in two-and-twenty hours. To beat off this pertinacious rival, the proprietor of the stage had been obliged to propitiate the inn-keepers of various important towns, by dividing his favours amongst them; and thus the traveller was forced

to wait nearly one hour at Hythe, during which he might sup if he liked, although he was only about five miles from Folkestone.

The supper room of the inn was vacant when the two officers of Dragoons entered, but the table, covered with its neat white cloth, and all the preparations for a substantial meal, together with a bright fire sparkling in the grate, rendered its aspect cheerful and reviving after a long and tedious journey, such as that which had just been accomplished. Sir Edward Digby looked round well pleased, turned his back to the fire, spoke to the landlord and his maid about supper, and seemed disposed to enjoy himself during the period of his stay. He ordered, too, a pint of claret, which he was well aware was likely to be procured in great perfection upon the coast of Kent. The landlord in consequence conceived a high respect for him, and very much undervalued all the qualities of his companion, who, seating himself at the table, leaned his head upon his hand, and fell into deep thought, without giving orders for anything. The host, with his attendant star,

disappeared from the room to procure the requisites for the travellers' meal, and Sir Edward Digby immediately took advantage of their absence to say, "Come, come, my dear Colonel, shake this off. I think all that we have lately heard should have tended to revive hope, and to give comfort. During all the six years that we have been more like brothers than friends, I have never seen you so much cast down as now, when you are taking the field under the most favourable circumstances, with name, station, reputation, fortune, and with the best reason to believe those true whom you had been taught to suppose false."

"I cannot tell, Digby," replied his companion; "we shall hear more ere long, and doubt is always well nigh as painful as the worst certainty. Besides, I am returning to the scenes of my early youth—scenes stored, it is true, with many a sweet and happy memory, but full also of painful recollections. Those memories themselves are but as an inscription on a tomb, where hopes and pleasures, the bright dreams of youth, the ardent aspirations of first true love, the sweet

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endearments of a happy home, the treasured caresses of the best of mothers, the counsels, the kindness, the unvarying tenderness of the noblest and highest minded of fathers, all lie buried. There may be a pleasure in visiting that tomb, but it is a melancholy one; and when I think that it was for me—that it was on my account, my father suffered persecution and wrong, till a powerful mind, and a vigorous frame gave way, there is a bitterness mingled with all my remembrances of these scenes, from which I would fain clear my heart. I will do so, too, but it will require some solitary thought, some renewed familiarity with all the objects round, to take off the sharpness of the first effect. You, go on to Folkestone and see that all is right there, I will remain here and wait for the rest. As soon as you have ascertained that everything is prepared to act in case we are called upon—which I hope may not be the case, as I do not like the service—you may betake yourself to Harbourne House, making me a report as you pass. When I have so distributed the men that we can rapidly concentrate a suf-

ficient number upon any spot where they may be required, I will come on after you to our good old friend's dwelling. There you can see me, and let me know what is taking place."

"I think you had better not let him know who you really are," replied Sir Edward Digby, "at least till we have seen how the land lies."

"I do not know—I will think of it," answered the other gentleman, whom for the present we shall continue to call Osborn, though the learned reader has already discovered that such was not his true name. "It is evident," he continued, "that old Mr. Croyland does not remember me, although I saw him frequently when he was in England for a short time, some six or seven years before he finally quitted India. However, though I feel I am much changed, it is probable that many persons will recognise me whenever I appear in the neighbourhood of Cranbrook, and he might take it ill, that he who was so good and true a friend both to my uncle and my father, should be left in ignorance. Perhaps it would be better to confide in him fully, and make him aware of all my views and purposes."

"Under the seal of confession, then," said his friend; "for he is evidently a very talkative old gentleman. Did you remark how he once or twice declared he would not tell a story, that it was no business of his, and then went on to tell it directly."

"True, such was always his habit," answered Osborn; "and his oddities have got somewhat exaggerated during the last twelve years; but he's as true and faithful as ever man was, and nothing would induce him to betray a secret confided to him."

"You know best," replied the other; but the entrance of the landlord with the claret, and the maid with the supper, broke off the conversation, and there was no opportunity of renewing it till it was announced that the horses were to, and the coach was ready. The two friends then took leave of each other, both coachman and host being somewhat surprised to find that one of the travellers was about to remain behind.

When, however, a portmanteau, a sword-case, and a large trunk, or mail as it was then called, had been handed out of the egregious boot,

Osborn walked into the inn once more, and called the landlord to him. "I shall, most likely," he said, "take up my quarters with you for some days, so you will be good enough to have a bed room prepared for me. You must also let me have a room, however small, where I can read, and write, and receive any persons who may come to see me, for I have a good deal of business to transact."

"Oh, yes, sir—I understand," replied the host, with a knowing elevation of one eye-brow and a depression of the other, "Quite snug and private. You shall have a room at the back of the house with two doors, so that they can come in by the one, and go out through the other, and nobody know anything about it."

"I rather suspect you mistake," answered the guest, with a smile, "and for fear you should say anything, under an error, that you might be sorry for afterwards, let me tell you at once that I am an officer of Dragoons, and that the business I speak of is merely regimental business."

The host's face grew amazingly blank; for a smuggler in a large way was, in his estimation,

a much more valuable and important guest than an officer in the army, even had he been Commander-in-Chief of the forces; but Osborn proceeded to relieve his mind from some of its anxieties by saying: "You will understand that I am neither a spy nor an informer, my good friend, but merely come here to execute whatever orders I may receive from government as a military man. I tell you who I am at once, that you may, as far as possible, keep from my sight any of those little transactions which I am informed are constantly taking place on this coast. I shall not, of course, step over the line of my duty, which is purely military, to report anything I see; but still I should not like that any man should say I was cognizant of proceedings contrary to the interests of the government. This hint, however, I doubt not, will be enough."

"Sir, you are a gentleman," said the host, "and as a nod is as good as a wink to a blind horse, I shall take care you have no annoyance. You must wait a little for your bed-room though, for we did not know you were going to stay;

but we will lose no time getting it ready. Can I do anything else to serve you, sir?"

"I think not," replied Osborn. "But one thing will be necessary. I expect five horses down to-morrow, and there must be found stabling for them, and accommodation for the servants."

The landlord, who was greatly consoled by these latter proofs of his guest's opulence and importance, was proceeding to assure him that all manner of conveniences, both for horse and man were to be found at his inn, when the door of the room opened, and a third person was added to the party within. The moment the eye of the traveller by the coach fell upon him, his face lighted up with a well pleased smile, and he exclaimed, "Ah, my good friend, is that you?—I little expected to find you in this part of Kent. What brought you hither, after our long voyage?"

"The same that brought you," answered the other: "old memories and loved associations."

But before we proceed to notice what was Osborn's reply, we must, though very unwilling to give long descriptions either of personal appearance or of dress, pause to notice briefly those of the stranger who had just entered.

He had originally been a tall man, and probably a powerful one, but he now stooped considerably, and was extremely thin. His face had no colour in it, and even the lips were pale, but yet the hue was not cadaverous, or even what could be called sickly. The features were generally small and fine, except the eyes, which were large and bright, with a sort of brilliant but unsafe fire in them, and that peculiar searching and intense gaze when speaking to any one, which is common to people of strong imaginations, who try to convey to others more than they actually say. His forehead, too, was high and grand, but wrinkled over with the furrows of thought and care; and on the right side was a deep indentation, with a gash across it, as if the skull had been driven in by a blow. His hair, which was long and thin, was milk white, and though his teeth were fine, yet the wrinkles of his skin, the peculiar roughness of the ear, and the shrivelled hand, all bore testimony of an advanced age. Yet, perhaps, he might be younger than he looked, for the light in that eager eye plainly spoke one of those quick, anxious, ever labouring spirits which wear the

frame by the internal emotions, infinitely more rapidly and more destructively than any of the external events and circumstances of life. One thing was very peculiar about him—at least, in this country—for on another continent such a peculiarity might have called for no attention. On either cheek, beginning just behind the external corner of the eye, and proceeding in a graceful wave all along the cheek bone, turning round, like an acanthus leaf, at the other extremity upon the cheek itself, was a long line of very minute blue spots, with another, and another, and another beneath it, till the whole assumed the appearance of a rather broad arabesque painted in blue upon his face. His dress in other respects (if this tattooing might be called a part of his dress) though coarse in texture was good. The whole, too, was black, except where the white turned-down collar of his shirt appeared between his coat and his pale brownish skin. His shoes were large and heavy like those used by the countrymen in that part of the county, and in them he wore a pair of silver buckles, not very large, but which in their

peculiar form and ornaments, gave signs of considerable antiquity. Though bent, as we have said, thin, and pale, he seemed active and energetic. All his motions were quick and eager, and he grasped the hand which Osborn extended to him, with a warmth and enthusiasm very different from the ordinary expression of common friendship.

"You mistake," said the young gentleman, in answer to his last observation. "It was not old memories and loved associations which brought me here at all, Mr. Warde. It was an order from the commander-in-chief. Had I not received it, I should not have visited this place for years—if ever!"

"Yes, yes, you would," replied the old man; "you could not help yourself. It was written in the book of your fate. It was not to be avoided. You were drawn here by an irresistible impulse to undergo what you have to undergo, to perform that which is assigned you, and to do and suffer all those things which are written on high."

"I wonder to hear *you* speaking in terms so

like those of a fatalist," answered Osborn—"you whom I have always heard so strenuously assert man's responsibility for all his actions, and scoff at the idea of his excusing himself on the plea of his predestination."

"True, true," answered the old man whom he called Warde,—"predestination affords him no excuse for aught that is wrong, for though it be an inscrutable mystery how those three great facts are to be reconciled, yet certain it is that Omniscience cannot be ignorant of that which will take place, any more than of that which has taken place; that everything which God foreknows, must take place, and has been pre-determined by his will, and that yet—as every man must feel within himself—his own actions depend upon his volition, and if they be evil he alone is to blame. The end is to come, Osborn—the end is to come when all will be revealed—and doubt not that it will be for God's glory. I often think," he continued in a less emphatic tone, "that man with his free will is like a child with a plaything. We see the babe about to dash it against the wall in mere wantonness, we know

that he will injure it—perhaps break it to pieces —perhaps hurt himself with it in a degree; we could prevent it, yet we do not, thinking perhaps that it will be a lesson—one of those, the accumulation of which makes experience, if not wisdom. At all events the punishment falls upon him; and, if duly warned, he has no right to blame us for that which his own will did, though we saw what he would do, and could have prevented him from doing so. We are all spoilt children, Osborn, and remain so to the end, though God gives us warning enough,—but here comes my homely meal."

At the same moment the landlord brought in a dish of vegetables, some milk and some pottage, which he placed upon the table, giving a shrewd look to the young officer, but saying to his companion, "There, I have brought what you ordered, sir; but I cannot help thinking you had better take a bit of meat. You had nothing but the same stuff this morning, and no dinner that I know of."

"Man, I never eat anything that has drawn the breath of life," replied Warde. "The first

of our race brought death into the world and was permitted to inflict it upon others, for the satisfaction of his own appetites; but it was a permission, and not an injunction—except for sacrifice. I will not be one of the tyrants of the whole creation; I will have no more of the tiger in my nature than is inseparable from it; and as to gorging myself some five or six times a day with unnecessary food—am I a swine, do you think, to eat when I am not hungry, for the sole purpose of devouring? No, no, the simplest food, and that only for necessity, is best for man's body and his mind. We all grow too rank and superfluous."

Thus saying, he approached the table, said a short grace over that which was set before him, and then sitting down, ate till he was satisfied, without exchanging a word with any one during the time that he was thus engaged. It occupied less than five minutes, however, to take all that he required, and then starting up suddenly, he thanked God for what he had given him, took up his hat and turned towards the door.

"I am going out, Osborn," he said, "for my evening walk. Will you come with me?"

"Willingly for half an hour," answered the young officer, and, telling the landlord as he passed that he would be back by the time that his room was ready, he accompanied his eccentric acquaintance out into the streets of Hythe, and thence, through some narrow walks and lanes, to the sea-shore.

CHAPTER IV.

THE sky was clear and bright; the moonlight was sleeping in dream-like splendour upon the water, and the small waves, thrown up by the tide more than the wind, came rippling along the beach like a flood of diamonds. All was still and silent in the sky, and upon the earth; and the soft rustle of the waters upon the shore seemed but to say "Hush!" as if nature feared that any louder sound should interrupt her calm repose. To the west, stretched out the faint low line of coast towards Dungeness; and to the east, appeared the high cliffs near Folkestone and Dover—grey and solemn; while the open heaven above looked down with its tiny stars and lustrous moon upon the wide extended sea,

glittering in the silver veil cast over her sleeping bosom from on high.

Such was the scene presented to the eyes of the two wanderers when they reached the beach, a little way on the Sandgate side of Hythe, and both paused to gaze upon it for several minutes in profound silence.

"This is indeed a night to walk forth upon the sands," said the young officer at length. "It seems to me, that of all the many scenes from which man can derive both instruction and comfort, in the difficulties and troubles of life, there is none so elevating, so strengthening, as that presented by the sea shore on a moonlight night. To behold that mighty element, so full of destructive and of beneficial power, lying tranquilly within the bound which God affixed to it, and to remember the words, 'Thus far shalt thou come, and no farther, and here shall thy proud waves be stopped,' affords so grand an illustration of his might, so fine a proof of the truth of his promises, that the heart must be hard indeed and the mind dull, not to receive confirmation of faith, and encouragement in hope."

"More, far more, may man receive," replied his companion, "if he be but willing; but that gross and corrupt insect refuses all instruction, and though the whole universe holds out blessings, still chooses the curse. Where is there a scene whence man may not receive benefit? What spot upon the whole earth has not something to speak to his heart, if he would but listen? In his own busy passions, however, and in his own fierce contentions, in his sordid creeping after gain, in his trickery and his knavery, even in his loves and pleasures, man turns a deaf ear to the great voice speaking to him; and the only scene of all this earth which cannot benefit the eye that looks upon it, is that in which human beings are the chief actors. There all is foulness, or pitifulness, or vice; and one, to live in happiness, and to take the moral of all nature to his heart, should live alone with nature. I will find me out such a place, where I can absent myself entirely, and contemplate nought but the works of God without the presence of man, for I am sick to death of all that I have seen of him and his, especially in what is called a civilized state."

"You have often threatened to do so, Warde," answered the young officer, "but yet methinks, though you rail at him, you love man too much to quit his abodes entirely. I have seen you kind and considerate to savages of the most horrible class; to men whose daily practice it is to torture with the most unheard of cruelty the prisoners whom they take in battle; and will you have less regard for other fellow-creatures, because they are what you call civilized?"

"The savage is at least sincere," replied his companion. "The want of sincerity is the great and crowning vice of all this portion of the globe. Cruel the wild hunters may be, but are they more cruel than the people here? Which is the worst torment, a few hours' agony at the stake, singing the war-song, all ended by a blow of a hatchet, or long years of mental torture, when every scorn and contumely, every bitter injustice, every cruel bereavement that man can inflict or suffer, is piled upon your head, till the load becomes intolerable. Then, too, it is done in a smooth and smiling guise. The civilized fiend looks softly upon you while he wounds you to the heart—

makes a pretext of law, and justice, and equity—would have you fancy him a soft good man, while there is no act of malevolence and iniquity that he does not practise. The savage is true, at all events. The man who fractured my skull with a blow of his tomahawk, made no pretence of friendship or of right. He did it boldly, as an act customary with his people, and would have led me to the stake and danced with joy to see me suffering, had I not been rescued. He was sincere at least: but how would the Englishman have served me? He would have wrung my heart with pangs insupportable, and all the time have talked of his great grief to afflict me, of the necessity of the case, of justice being on his side, and of a thousand other vain and idle pretexts, but aggravating the act by mocking me with a show of generosity."

"I fear my excellent friend that you have at some time suffered sadly from man's baseness," said Osborn; "but yet I think you are wrong to let the memory thereof affect you thus. I, too, have suffered, and perhaps shall have to suffer more; but yet I would not part with the

best blessings God has given to man, as you have done, for any other good."

"What have I parted with that I could keep?" asked the other, sharply: "what blessings? I know of none!"

"Trust—confidence," replied his young companion. "I know you will say that they have been taken from you; that you have not thrown them away, that you have been robbed of them. But have you not parted with them too easily? Have you not yielded at once, without a struggle to retain what I still call the best blessings of God? There are many villains in the world—I know it but too well; there are many knaves. There are still more cold and selfish egotists, who, without committing actual crimes or injuring others, do good to none; but there are also many true and upright hearts, many just, noble, and generous men; and were it a delusion to think so, I would try to retain it still."

"And suffer for it in the hour of need, in the moment of the deepest confidence," answered Warde. "If you must have confidence, place it in the humble and the low, in the rudest and least

civilized—ay, in the very outcasts of society—rather than in the polished and the courtly, the great and high. I would rather trust my life, or my purse, to the honour of the common robber, and to his generosity, than to the very gentlemanly man of fashion and high station. Now, if, as you say, you have not come down hither for old associations, you must be sent to hunt down honester men than those who sent you—men who break boldly through an unjust and barbarous system, which denies to our land the goods of another, and who, knowing that the very knaves who devised that system, did it but to enrich themselves, stop with a strong hand a part of the plunder on the way—or, rather, insist at the peril of their lives, on man's inherent right to trade with his neighbours, and frustrate the roguish devices of those who would forbid to our land the use of that produced by another."

Osborn smiled at his companion's defence of smuggling, but replied, "I can conceive a thousand reasons, my good friend, why the trade in certain things should be totally prohibited, and a high duty for the interests of the state be

placed on others. But I am not going to argue with you on all our institutions; merely this I will say, that when we entrust to certain men the power of making laws, we are bound to obey those laws when they are made; and it were but candid and just to suppose that those who had made them, after long deliberation, did so for the general good of the whole."

"For their own villanous ends," answered Warde—"for their own selfish interests. The good of the whole!—what is it in the eyes of any of these law-givers but the good of a party?"

"But do you not think," asked the young officer, "that we ourselves, who are not law-givers, judge their actions but too often under the influence of the very motives we attribute to them? Has party no share in our own bosoms? Has selfishness—have views of our own interests, in opposition either to the interests of others or the general weal, no part in the judgment that we form? Each man carps at that which suits him not, and strives to change it, without the slightest care whether, in so doing, he be not bringing ruin on the heads of thousands. But as to what you said just now of my being sent hither

to hunt down the smuggler, such is not the case. I am sent to lend my aid to the civil power when called upon to do so—but nothing more; and we all know that the civil power has proved quite ineffective in stopping a system, which began by violation of a fiscal law, and has gone on to outrages the most brutal, and the most daring. I shall not step beyond the line of my duty, my good friend; and I will admit that many of these very misguided men themselves, who are carrying on an illegal traffic in this daring manner, fancy themselves justified by such arguments as you have just now used—nay, more, I do believe that there are some men amongst them of high and noble feelings, who never dream that they are dishonest in breaking a law that they dislike. But if we break one law thus, why should we keep any?—why not add robbery and murder if it suits us?

"Ay, there *are* high minded and noble men amongst them," answered Warde, not seeming to heed the latter part of what his companion said, "and there stands one of them. He has evil in him doubtless; for he is a man and an Englishman; but I have found none here

who has less, and many who have more. Yet were that man taken in pursuing his occupation, they would imprison, exile, perhaps hang him, while a multitude of knaves in gilded coats, would be suffered to go on committing every sin, and almost every crime, unpunished—a good man, an excellent man, and yet a smuggler."

The young officer knew it was in vain to reason with him, for in the frequent intercourse they had held together, he had perceived that, with many generous and noble feelings, with a pure heart, and almost ascetic severity of life, there was a certain perversity in the course of Mr. Warde's thoughts, which rendered it impossible to turn them from the direction which they naturally took. It seemed as if by long habit they had channelled for themselves so deep a bed, that they could never be diverted thence; and consequently, without replying at first, he merely turned his eyes in the direction which the other pointed out, trying to catch sight of the person of whom he spoke. They were now on the low sandy shore which runs along between the town of Hythe and the beautiful little water-

ing place of Sandgate. But it must be recollected, that at the time I speak of, the latter place displayed no ornamental villas, no gardens full of flowers, almost touching on the sea, and consisted merely of a few fishermen's, or rather smuggler's, huts, with one little public house, and a low-browed shop, filled with all the necessities that the inhabitants might require. Thus nothing like the mass of buildings which the watering place now can boast, lay between them and the Folkestone cliffs; and the whole line of the coast, except at one point, where the roof of a house intercepted the view, was open before Osborn's eyes; yet neither upon the shore itself, nor upon the green upland, which was broken by rocks and bushes, and covered by thick dry grass, could he perceive anything resembling a human form. A minute after, however, he thought he saw something move against the rugged background, and the next moment, the head and shoulders of a man rising over the edge of the hill caught his eyes, and as his companion walked forward in silence, he inquired,

"Have you known him long, or is this

one of your sudden judgments, my good friend ?"

"I knew him when he was a boy and a lad," answered Wilmot, "I know him now that he is a man—so it is no sudden judgment. Come, let us speak with him, Osborn," and he advanced rapidly, by a narrow path, up the side of the slope.

Osborn paused a single instant, and then followed, saying, "Be upon your guard, Warde; and remember how I am circumstanced. Neither commit me nor let him commit himself."

"No, no, fear not," answered his friend, "I am no smuggler, young man;" and he strode on before, without pausing for further consultation. As they climbed the hill, the figure of the man of whom they had been speaking became more and more distinct, while walking up and down upon a flat space at the top of the first step or wave of ground; he seemed to take no notice of their approach. When they came nearer still, he paused, as if waiting for their coming; and the moon shining full upon him, displayed his powerful form, standing in an attitude of easy grace, with the arms folded

on the chest, and the head slightly bent forward. He was not above the middle height; but broad in the shoulders, and long in the arms; robust and strong—every muscle was round and swelling, and yet not heavy; for there was the appearance of great lightness and activity in his whole figure, strangely combined with that of vigour and power. His head was small, and well set upon his shoulders; and the very position in which he stood, the firm planting of his feet on the ground, the motionless crossing of his arm upon his breast, all seemed to argue to the mind of Osborn—and he was one not unaccustomed to judge of character by external signs—a strong and determined spirit, well fitted for the rough and adventurous life which he had undertaken.

"Good night, Harding," said Mr. Warde, as they came up to the spot where he stood. "What a beautiful evening it is!"

"Good night, sir," answered the man, in a civil tone, and with a voice of considerable melody. "It is indeed a beautiful evening, though sometimes I like to see the cloudy sky, too."

"And yet I dare say you enjoy a walk by the bright sea, in the calm moonlight, as much as I do," rejoined Mr. Warde.

"Ay, that I do, sir," replied the smuggler. "That's what brought me out to-night, for there's nothing else doing; but I should not rest quiet, I suppose, in my bed, if I did not take my stroll along the downs or somewhere, and look over the sea, while she lies panting in the moonbeams. She's a pretty creature, and I love her dearly. I wonder how people can live inland."

"Oh, there are beautiful scenes enough inland," said Osborn, joining in the conversation; "both wild and grand, and calm and peaceful."

"I know there are, sir, I know there are," answered the smuggler, gazing at him attentively, "and if ever I were to live away from the beach, I should say, give me the wild and grand, for I have seen many a beautiful place inland, especially in Wales; but still it always seems to me as if there was something wanting when the sea is not there. I suppose it is natural for an Englishman."

"Perhaps it is," rejoined Osborn, "for certainly when Nature rolled the ocean round us, she intended us for a maritime people. But to return to what you were saying, if I could choose my own abode, it should be amongst the calm and peaceful scenes, of which the eye never tires, and amongst which the mind rests in repose."

"Ay, if it is repose one is seeking," replied the smuggler, with a laugh, "well and good. Then a pleasant little valley, with trees and a running stream, and a neat little church, and the parsonage, may do well enough. But I dare say you and I, sir, have led very different lives, and so have got different likings. I have always been accustomed to the storm and the gale, to a somewhat adventurous life, and to have that great wide sea before my eyes for ever. You, I dare say, have been going on quietly and peacefully all your days, perhaps in London, or in some great town, knowing nothing of hardships or of dangers; so that is the reason you love quiet places."

"Quite the reverse!" answered Osborn, with a smile—"mine has been nothing but a life of peril and danger, and activity, as far as it hitherto has

gone. From the time I was eighteen till now, the battle and the skirmish, the march and the retreat, with often the hard ground for my bed, as frequently the sky for my covering, and at best a thin piece of canvas to keep off the blast, have been my lot, but it is that very fact that makes me long for some repose, and love scenes that give the picture of it to the imagination, if not the reality to the heart. I should suppose that few men who have passed their time thus, and known from youth to manhood nothing but strife and hourly peril, do not sooner or later desire such tranquillity."

"I don't know, sir," said the smuggler; "it may be so, and the time may come with me; but yet I think habits one is bred to, get such a hold of the heart that we can't do without them. I often fancy I should like a month's quiet, too; but then I know before the month was out I should long to be on the sea again."

"Man is a discontented creature," said Warde, —"not even the bounty of God can satisfy him. I do not believe that he would even rest in heaven, were he not wearied of change by the

events of this life. Well may they say it is a state of trial."

"I hope I shall go to heaven, too," rejoined the smuggler; "but I should like a few trips first; and I dare say, when I grow an old man, and stiff and rusty, I shall be well contented to take my walk here in the sunshine, and talk of days that are gone; but at present, when one has life and strength, I could no more sit and get cankered in idleness than I could turn miller. This world's not a place to be still in; and I say, Blow wind, and push off the boat."

"But one may have activity enough without constant excitement and peril," answered Osborn.

"I don't know that there would be half the pleasure in it," replied the smuggler, laughing—"that we strive for, that we love. Everything must have its price, and cheap got is little valued. But who is this coming?" he continued, turning sharply round before either of his companions heard a sound.

The next moment, however, steps running up the face of the bank were distinguished, and in

another minute a boy of twelve or thirteen, dressed in a sailor's jacket, came hurrying up to the smuggler, and pulled his sleeve, saying, in a low voice, "Come hither—come hither; I want to speak to you."

The man took a step apart, and bending down his head listened to something which the boy whispered in his ear. "I will come—I will come directly," he said, at length, when the lad was done. "Run on and tell him, little Starlight; for I must get home first for a minute. Good night, gentlemen," he continued, turning to Mr. Warde and his companion, "I must go away for a longer walk;" and, without farther adieu, he began to descend the bank, leaving the two friends to take their way back to Hythe, conversing, as they went, much in the same strain as that in which they had indulged while coming thither, differing in almost every topic, but yet with some undefinable link of sympathy between them, which nevertheless owed its origin, in the old man's breast, to very different feelings from those which were experienced by his younger companion.

CHAPTER V.

THERE was an old house, built in a style which acquired the mint-mark of fashion of about the reign of George the First, and was considered by those of the English, or opposite party, to be peculiarly well qualified for the habitation of Hanover rats. It stood at a little distance from the then small hamlet of Harbourne, and was plunged into one of the southern apertures of the wood of that name, having its gardens and pleasure-grounds around it, with a terrace and a lawn stretching out to the verge of a small parish road, which passed at the distance of somewhat less than a quarter of a mile from the windows. It was all of red brick, and looked square and

formal enough, with the two wings projecting like the a-kimbo arms of some untamed virago, straight and resolute as a redoubt. The numerous windows, however, with very tolerable spaces between them; the numerous chimneys, with every sort of form and angle; the numerous doors, of every shape and size, and the square precision of the whole, bespoke it a very capacious building, and the inside justified fully the idea which the mind of a traveller naturally formed from the outside. It was, in truth, a roomy, and in some cases a very convenient abode; but it was laid out upon a particular plan, which it may not be amiss to write down, for the practical instruction of the reader unlearned in such edifices.

In the centre of the ground-floor was a large hall of a cruciform shape, each of the limbs being about fifteen feet wide. The two shorter arms of the cross stretched from side to side of the building in its width; the two longer from end to end of its length. The southern termination of the shorter arms was the great hall-door; the northern arm, which formed the pas-

sage between the various ranges of offices, extended to a door at the back, opening into a court-yard surrounded by coach-houses, stables, cow-sheds, pig-sties, and hen-roosts. But the offices, and the passage between them, were shut off from the main hall and the rest of the mansion by double doors; and the square of fifteen feet in the centre of the hall was, to the extent of about two-thirds of the whole, occupied by a large, low-stepped, broad-ballustraded oaken staircase. The eastern and western limbs of the cross afforded the means of communicating with various rooms,—such as library, dining-room, drawing-room, music-room, magistrate's-room, gentleman's-room, and billiard-room, with one or two others to which no name had been applied. Many of these rooms had doors which led into the one adjacent; but this was not invariably the case, for from the main corridor branched off several little passages, separating in some instances one chamber from the other, and leading out upon the terrace by the smaller doors which we have noticed above. What was the use of these passages and doors nobody

was ever able to divine, and it remains a mystery to the present day, which I shall not attempt to solve by venturing any hypothesis upon so recondite a subject. The second floor above was laid out much in the same way as the one below, except that one of the limbs of the cross was wanting, the space over the great door being appropriated to a very tolerable bed-room. From this floor to the other, descended two or three staircases, the principal one being the great open flight of steps which I have already mentioned; and the second, or next in importance, being a stone staircase, which reached the ground between the double doors, that shut out the main hall from the offices.

Having thus given some idea of the interior of the building, I will only pause to notice, that, at the period I speak of, it had one very great defect. It was very much out of repair,—not, indeed, of that sort of substantial repair which is necessary to comfort, but of that pleasant repair which is agreeable to the eye. It was well and solidly built, and was quite wind and water tight; but although the builders

of the day in which it was erected were, as every one knows, peculiarly neat in their brick-work, yet Time would have his way even with their constructions, and he had maliciously chiselled out the pointing from between the sharp, well-cut bricks, scraped away the mortar from the stone copings, and cracked and blistered the painting of the wood-work. This labour of his had not only given a venerable, but also a somewhat dilapidated appearance to the mansion; and some green mould, with which he had taken the pains to dabble all the white parts of the edifice, did not decrease the look of decay.

Sweeping round from the parish road that we have mentioned was a branch, leading by the side of the lawn, and a gentle ascent up to the terrace and to the great door, and carriages on arriving passed along the whole front of the house by the western angle before they reached the court-yard behind. But from that court-yard there were various other means of exit. One to the kitchen garden, one to two or three other courts, and one into the wood which came

within fifty yards of the enclosure; for, to use the ordinary romance phrase, Harbourne House was literally "bosomed in wood." The windows, however, and the front, commanded a fine view of a rich and undulating country, plentifully garnished with trees, but still, for a considerable distance, exposed to the eye, from the elevated ground upon which the mansion was placed. A little hamlet was seen at the distance of about two miles in front—I rather suspect it was Kenchill—and to the eastward the house looked over the valley towards the high ground by Woodchurch and Woodchurch Beacon, catching a blue line which probably was Romney Marsh. Between, Woodchurch, however, and itself, was seen standing out, straight and upright, a very trim-looking white dwelling, flanked by some pleasant groves, and to the west were seen one or two gentlemen's seats scattered about over the face of the country. Behind, nothing of course was to be seen but tree-tops, except from the window of one of the attics, whence the housemaid could descry Biddenden Windmill and the top of Biddenden Church. Harbourne

Wood was indeed, at that time, very extensive, joining on to the large piece of woodland, from which it is now separated, and stretching out as far as that place with an unpleasant name, called Gallows Green. The whole of this space, and a considerable portion of the cultivated ground around, was within the manor of the master of the mansion, Sir Robert Croyland, of Harbourne, the elder brother of that Mr. Zachary Croyland, whom we have seen travelling down into Kent with two companions in the newly established stage-coach.

About four days after that memorable journey, a traveller on horseback, followed by a servant leading another horse, and with a portmanteau behind him, rode up the little parish road we have mentioned, took the turning which led to the terrace, and drew in his bridle at the great door of Harbourne House. I would describe him again, but I have already given the reader so correct and accurate a picture of Sir Edward Digby, that he cannot make any mistake. The only change which had taken place in his appearance since he set out from London,

was produced by his being now dressed in a full military costume ; but nevertheless the eyes of a fair lady, who was in the drawing-room and had a full view of the terrace, conveyed to her mind, as she saw him ride up, the impression that he was a very handsome man indeed. In two minutes more, which were occupied by the opening of the door and sundry directions given by the young baronet to his servant, Sir Edward Digby was ushered into the drawing-room, and advanced with a frank, free, military air, though unacquainted with any of the persons it contained. As his arrival about that hour was expected, the whole family of Harbourne House was assembled to receive him ; and before we proceed farther, we may as well give some account of the different persons of whom the little circle was composed.

The first whom Sir Edward's eyes fell upon was the master of the mansion, who had risen, and was coming forward to welcome his guest. Sir Robert Croyland, however, was so different a person from his brother, in every point, that the young officer could hardly believe

that he had the baronet before him. He was a large, heavy-looking man, with good features and expressive eyes, but sallow in complexion, and though somewhat corpulent, having that look of loose, flabby obesity, which is generally an indication of bad health. His dress, though scrupulously clean and in the best fashion of the time, fitted him ill, being too large even for his large person; and the setting of the diamond ring which he wore upon his hand was scarcely more yellow than the hand itself. On his face he bore a look of habitual thought and care, approaching moroseness, which even the smile he assumed on Sir Edward's appearance could not altogether dissipate. In his tone, however, he was courtly and kind, though perhaps a little pompous, expressed his delight at seeing his old friend's son in Harbourne House, shook him warmly by the hand, and then led him ceremoniously forward to introduce him to his sister, Mrs. Barbara Croyland, and his two daughters.

The former lady might very well have had applied to her Fielding's inimitable descrip-

tion of the old maid. Her appearance was very similar, her station and occupation much the same; but nevertheless, in all essential points, Mrs. Barbara Croyland was a very different person from the sister of Squire Allworthy. She was a kind-hearted soul as ever existed; gentle in her nature, anxious to do the very best for every body, a little given to policy for the purpose of accomplishing that end, and consequently, nine times out of ten, making folks very uncomfortable in order to make them comfortable, and doing all manner of mischief for the purpose of setting things right. No woman ever had a more perfect abnegation of self than Mrs. Barbara Croyland, in all things of great importance. She had twice missed a very good opportunity of marriage, by making up a match between one who was quite ready to be her own lover and one of her female friends, for whom he cared very little. She had lent the whole of her own private fortune, except a small annuity, which by some chance had been settled upon her, to her brother Sir Robert, without taking any security

whatsoever for principal or interest; and she was always ready, when there was anything in her purse, to give it away to the worthy or unworthy—rather, indeed, preferring the latter, from a conviction that they were more likely to be destitute of friends than those who had some claim upon society.

Nevertheless Mrs. Barbara Croyland was not altogether without that small sort of selfishness which is usually termed vanity. She was occasionally a little affronted and indignant with her friends, when they disapproved of her spoiling their whole plans with the intention of facilitating them. She knew that her design was good; and she thought it very ungrateful in the world to be angry when her good designs produced the most opposite results to those which she intended. She was fully convinced, too, that circumstances were perversely against her; and yet for her life she could not refrain from trying to make those circumstances bend to her purpose, notwithstanding all the raps on the knuckles she received; and she had still some scheme going on, which, though continually

disappointed, rose up Hydra-like, with a new head springing out as soon as the other was cut off. As it was at her suggestion, and in favour of certain plans which she kept deep in the recesses of her own bosom, that Sir Robert Croyland had claimed acquaintance with Sir Edward Digby on the strength of an old friendship with his father, and had invited him down to Harbourne House immediatcly on the return of his regiment to England, it may well be supposed that Miss Barbara received him with her most gracious smiles—which, to say the truth, though the face was wrinkled with age, and the complexion not very good, were exceedingly sweet and benignant, springing from a natural kindness of heart, which, if guided by a sounder discretion, would have rendered her one of the most amiable persons on the earth.

After a few words of simple courtesy on both parts, Sir Edward turned to the other two persons who were in the room, where he found metal more attractive—at least, for the eyes. The first to whom he was introduced was a young lady, who seemed to be about one-and-

twenty years of age, though she had in fact just attained another year; and though Sir Robert somewhat hurried him on to the next, who was younger, the keen eye of the young officer marked enough to make him aware that, if so cold and so little disposed to look on a lover as her uncle had represented, she might well become a very dangerous neighbour to a man with a heart not well guarded against the power of beauty. Her hair, eyes, and eylashes were almost black, and her complexion of a clear brown, with the rose blushing faintly in the cheek; but the eyes were of a deep blue. The whole form of the head, the fall of the hair, the bend of the neck from the shoulders, were all exquisitely symmetrical and classical, and nothing could be more lovely than the line of the brow and the chiselled cutting of the nose. The upper lip, small and delicately drawn, the under lip full and slightly apart, shewing the pearl-like teeth beneath; the turn of the ear, and the graceful line in the throat, might all have served as models for the sculptor or the painter; for the colouring was as rich and beautiful as the

form; and when she rose and stood to receive him, with the small hand leaning gently on the arm of the chair, he thought he had never seen anything more graceful than the figure, or more harmonious than its calm dignity, with the lofty gravity of her countenance. If there was a defect in the face, it was perhaps that the chin was a little too prominent, but yet it suited well with the whole countenance and with its expression, giving it decision without harshness, and a look of firmness, which the bright smile that fluttered for a moment round the lips, deprived of everything that was not gentle and kind. There was soul, there was thought, there was feeling, in the whole look; and Digby would fain have paused to see those features animated in conversation. But her father led him on, after a single word of introduction, to present him to his younger daughter, who, with some points of resemblance, offered a strange contrast to her sister. She, too, was very handsome, and apparently about two years younger; but hers was the style of beauty which, though it deserves a better name, is generally termed pretty. All the features were good, and the

hair exceedingly beautiful; but the face was not so oval, the nose perhaps a little too short, and the lips too sparkling with smiles to impress the mind, at first sight, so much as the countenance of the other. She seemed all happiness; and in looking to the expression and at her bright blue eyes, as they looked out through the black lashes, like violets from a clump of dark leaves, it was scarcely possible to fancy that she had ever known a touch of care or sorrow, or that one of the anxieties of life had ever even brushed her lightly with its wing. She seemed the flower just opening to the morning sunshine—the fruit, before the bloom had been washed away by one shower. Her figure, too, was full of young grace; her movements were all quicker, more wild and free than her sister's; and as she rose to receive Sir Edward Digby, it was more with the air of an old friend than a new acquaintance. Indeed, she was the first of the family who had seen him, for hers were the eyes which had watched his approach from the window, so that she felt as if she knew him better than any of them.

There was something very winning in the frank and cordial greeting with which she met him, and in an instant it had established a sort of communication between them which would have taken hours, perhaps days, to bring about with her sister. As Sir Edward Digby did not come there to fall in love, he would fain have resisted such influences, even at the beginning; and perhaps the words of old Mr. Croyland had somewhat put him upon his guard. But it was of no use being upon his guard; for, fortify himself as strongly as he would, Zara went through all his defences in an instant; and, seeming to take it for granted that they were to be great friends, and that there was not the slightest obstacle whatever to their being perfectly familiar in a lady-like and gentleman-like manner, of course they were so in five minutes, though he was a soldier who had seen some service, and she an inexperienced girl just out of her teens. But all women have a sort of experience of their own; or, if experience be not the right name, an intuition in matters where the other sex is

concerned, which supplies to them very rapidly a great part of that which long converse with the world bestows on men. Too true that it does not always act as a safeguard to their own hearts—true that it does not always guide them right in their own actions,—but still it does not fail to teach them the best means of winning where they wish to win; and if they do not succeed, it is far more frequently that the cards which they hold are not good, than that they play the game unskilfully.

Whether Sir Robert Croyland had or had not any forethought in his invitation of Sir Edward Digby, and, like a prudent father, judged that it would be quite as well his youngest daughter should marry a wealthy baronet, he was too wise to let anything like design appear; and though he suffered the young officer to pursue his conversation with Zara for two or three minutes longer than he had done with her sister, he soon interposed, by taking the first opportunity of telling his guest the names of those whom he had invited to meet him that day at dinner.

"We shall have but a small party," he said, in a somewhat apologetic tone, "for several of our friends are absent just now; but I have asked my good and eccentric brother Zachary to meet you to-day, Sir Edward; and also my excellent neighbour, Mr. Radford, of Radford Hall—a very superior man indeed under the surface, though the manner may be a little rough. His son, too, I trust will join us;" and he glanced his eye towards Edith, whose face grew somewhat paler than it had been before. Sir Robert instantly withdrew his gaze; but the look of both father and daughter had not been lost upon Digby; and he replied—

"I have the pleasure of knowing your brother already, Sir Robert. We were fellow-travellers as far as Ashford, four or five days ago. I hope he is well."

"Oh, quite well—quite well," answered the baronet; "but as odd as ever—nay odder, I think, for his expedition to London. That which seems to polish and soften other men, but renders him rougher and more extraordinary. But he was always very odd—very odd indeed, even as a boy."

"Ay, but he was always kind-hearted, brother Robert," observed Miss Barbara; "and though he may be a little odd, he has been in odd places, you know—India and the like; and besides, it does not do to talk of his oddity, as you are doing always, for if he heard of it, he might leave all his money away."

"He is only odd, I think," said Edith Croyland, "by being kinder and better than other men."

Sir Edward Digby turned towards her with a warm smile, replying—"So it struck me, Miss Croyland. He is so good and right-minded himself, that he is at times a little out of patience with the faults and follies of others—at least, such was my impression, from all I saw of him."

"It was a just one," answered the young lady, "and I am sure, Sir Edward, the more you see of him the more you will be inclined to overlook the oddities for the sake of the finer qualities."

It seemed to Sir Edward Digby that the commendations of Sir Robert Croyland's brother did

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not seem the most grateful of all possible sounds to the ears of the Baronet, who immediately after announced that he would have the pleasure of conducting his young guest to his apartments, adding that they were early people in the country, their usual dinner-hour being four o'clock, though he found that the fashionable people of London were now in the habit of dining at half-past four. Sir Edward accordingly followed him up the great oaken staircase to a very handsome and comfortable room, with a dressing-room at the side, in which he found his servant already busily employed in disburdening his bags and portmanteau of their contents.

Sir Robert paused for a moment—to see that his guest had everything which he might require, and then left him. But the young baronet did not proceed immediately to the business of the toilet, seating himself before the window of the bed-room, and gazing out with a thoughtful expression, while his servant continued his operations in the next room. From time to time the man looked in as if he had something to say, but his master continued in a reverie,

of which it may be as well to take some notice. His first thought was, "I must lay out the plan of my campaign; but I must take care not to get my wing of the army defeated while the main body is moving up to give battle. On my life, I'm a great deal too good-natured to put myself in such a dangerous position for a friend. The artillery that the old gentleman spoke of is much more formidable than I expected. My worthy colonel did not use so much of love's glowing colours in his painting as I supposed; but after all, there's no danger; I am proof against all such shots, and I fancy I must use little Zara for the purpose of getting at her sister's secrets. There can be no harm in making a little love to her, the least little bit possible. It will do my pretty coquette no harm, and me none either. It may be well to know how the land lies, however; and I dare say that fellow of mine has made some discoveries already; but the surest way to get nothing out of him is to ask him, and so I must let him take his own way."

His thoughts then turned to another branch

of the same subject; and he went on pondering rather than thinking for some minutes more. There is a state of mind which can scarcely be called thought; for thought is rapid and progressive, like the flight of a bird, whether it be in the gyrations of the swallow, or the straightforward course of the rook; but in the mode or condition of which I speak, the mind seems rather to hover over a particular object, like the hawk eyeing carefully that which is beneath it; and this state can no more be called thought than the hovering of the hawk can be called flight. Such was the occupation of Sir Edward Digby, as I have said, for several minutes, and then he went on to his conclusions. "She loves him still," he said to himself; "of that I feel sure. She is true to him still, and steadfast in her truth. Whatever may have been said or done has not been hers, and that is a great point gained; for now, with station, rank, distinction, and competence at least, he presents himself in a very different position from any which he could assume before; and unless on account of some unaccountable prejudice, the old

gentleman can have no objection. Oh, yes, she loves him still, I feel very sure! The calm gravity of that beautiful face has only been written there so early by some deep and unchanged feeling. We never see the sparkling brightness of youth so shadowed but by some powerful and ever-present memory, which, like the deep bass notes of a fine instrument, gives a solemn tone even to the liveliest music of life. She can smile, but the brow is still grave: there is something underneath it; and we must find out exactly what that is. Yet I cannot doubt; I am sure of it. Here, Somers! are not those things ready yet? I shall be too late for dinner."

"Oh, no, sir;" replied the man, coming in, and putting up the back of his hand to his head, in military fashion. "Your honour wont be too late. The great bell rings always half-an-hour before, then Mr. Radford is always a quarter-of-an-hour behind his time."

"I wonder who Mr. Radford is!" said Sir Edward Digby, as if speaking to himself. "He seems a very important person in the county."

"I can tell you, sir," said the man, "he is or was the richest person in the neighbourhood, and has got Sir Robert quite under his thumb, they say. He was a merchant, or a shopkeeper, the butler told me, in Hythe. But there was more money came in than ever went through his counting-house, and what between trading one way or another, he got together a great deal of riches, bought this place here in the neighbourhood, and set up for a gentleman. His son is to be married to Miss Croyland, they say; but the servants think that she hates him, and fancy that he would himself rather have her sister."

The latter part of this speech was that which interested Sir Edward Digby the most; but he knew that there was a certain sort of perversity about his servant, which made him less willing to answer a distinct question than to volunteer any information; and therefore he fixed upon another point, inquiring, "What do you mean, Somers, by saying that he is, or was, the richest man in the country?"

"Why, sir, that is as it may be," answered the man; "but one thing is certain—Miss Croy-

land has three times refused to marry this young Radford, notwithstanding all her father could say; and as for the young gentleman himself, why he's no gentleman at all, going about with all the bad characters in the county, and carrying on his father's old trade, like a highwayman. It has not quite answered so well though, for they say old Radford lost fully fifty thousand pounds by his last venture, which was run ashore somewhere about Romney Hoy. The boats were sunk, part of the goods seized, and the rest sent to the bottom. You may be sure he's a dare-devil, however, for whenever the servants speak of him, they sink their voice to a whisper, as if the fiend were at their elbow."

Sir Edward Digby was very well inclined to hear more; but while the man was speaking, the bell he had mentioned, rang, and the young baronet, who had a certain regard for his own personal appearance, hastened to dress and to descend to the drawing-room.

CHAPTER VI.

It is sometimes expedient in telling a tale of this kind, to introduce the different personages quietly to the reader one after the other, and to suffer him to become familiar with them separately, before they are all brought to act together, that he may have a clear and definite notion of their various characters, dispositions, and peculiarities, and be enabled to judge at once of the motives by which they are actuated, when we recite the deeds that they perform.

Having twice or thrice mentioned one of the prominent persons in this history, without having brought him visibly upon the scene, (as, in the natural course of events, I must

very soon do,) I shall now follow the plan above mentioned; and, in order to give the reader a distinct notion of Mr. Radford, his character and proceedings, will beg those who have gone on with me thus far, to step back with me to the same night, on which Mr. Warde and his young friend met the smuggler in his evening walk along the heights.

Not very far from the town of Hythe, not very far from the village of Sandgate, are still to be found the ruins of an ancient castle, which, by various deeds that have been performed within its walls, has acquired a name in English history. The foundation of the building is beyond our records; and tradition, always fond of the marvellous, carries back the period when the first stone was laid to the times of the Roman invaders of Great Britain. Others supposed that it was erected by the Saxons, but, as it now stands, it presents no trace of the handiwork of either of those two races of barbarians, and is simply one of those strongholds constructed by the Normans, or their close descendants, either to keep their

hold of a conquered country, or to resist the power both of tyrannical monarchs and dangerous neighbours. Various parts of the building are undoubtedly attributable to the reign of Henry II.; and if any portion be of an earlier date, of which I have some doubts, it is but small; but a considerable part is, I believe, of a still later epoch, and in some places may be traced the architecture common in the reign of Edward III. and of his grandson. The space enclosed within the outer walls is very extensive, and numerous detached buildings, chapels, halls, and apparently a priory, are still to be found built against those walls themselves, so that it is probable that the castle in remote days gave shelter to some religious body, which is rendered still more likely from the fact of Saltwood Castle and its manor having formerly appertained to the church and see of Canterbury.

Many a remarkable scene has undoubtedly passed in the courts and halls of that now ruined building, and it is even probable that there the dark and dreadful deed, which, though probably not of his contriving, em-

bittered the latter life of the second Henry, was planned and determined by the murderers of Thomas-à Becket. With such deeds, however, and those ancient times, we have nothing here to do; and at the period to which this tale refers, the castle, though in a much more perfect state than at present, was already in ruins. The park, which formerly surrounded it, had been long thrown open and divided into fields; but still the character which its formation had given to the neighbouring scenery had not passed away; and the rich extent of old pasture, the scattered woods and clumps of trees, the brawling brook, here and there diverted from its natural course for ornament or convenience,—all bespoke the former destination of the ground, for near a mile around on every side, when magnificent Archbishop Courtenay held the castle of Saltwood as his favourite place of residence.

Though, as I have said, grey ruin had possession of the building, yet the strength of its construction had enabled it in many parts to resist the attacks of time; and the great keep,

with its two lofty gate towers and wide-spreading hall, was then but very little decayed. Nevertheless, at that period no one tenanted the castle of Saltwood but an old man and his son, who cultivated a small portion of ground in the neighbourhood; and their dwelling was confined to three rooms in the keep, though they occupied several others by their implements of husbandry, occasionally diversified with sacks of grain, stores of carrots and turnips, and other articles of agricultural produce. Thus, every night, for a short time, lights were to be seen in Saltwood Castle, but all the buildings except the keep, were utterly neglected, and falling rapidly into a state of complete dilapidation.

It was towards this building, on the night I speak of, that the smuggler took his way, about a quarter of an hour after having suddenly broken off his conversation with Mr. Warde and the young officer. He walked on with a quick, bold, careless step, apparently without much thought or consideration of the interview to which he was summoned. He paused, indeed, more than once, and looked around him; but

it was merely to gaze at the beauty of the scenery, for which he had a great natural taste. It is no slight mistake to suppose that the constant intercourse with, and opportunity of enjoying the beauties of nature, diminish in any degree the pleasures that we thence derive. The direct contrary is the case. Every other delight, everything that man has contrived or found for himself, palls upon the taste by frequent fruition; but not so with those sources of pleasure which are given us by God himself; and the purer and freer they are from man's invention, the more permanent are they in their capability of bestowing happiness, the more extensive seems their quality of satisfying the ever-increasing desires of the spirit within us. Were it not so, the ardent attachment which is felt by those who have been born and brought up in the midst of fine and magnificent scenery to the place of their nativity, could not exist; and it will always be found that, other things being equal, those who live most amongst the beauties of nature, are those who most appreciate them.

Many a beautiful prospect presented itself to the smuggler, as he walked on by the light of the moon. At one place, the woods swept round him and concealed the rest of the country from his eyes; but then the moonbeams poured through the branches, or streamed along the path, and every now and then, between the old trunks and gnarled roots, he caught a sight of the deeper parts of the woodland, sleeping in the pale rays. At another, issuing forth upon the side of the hill, the leafy wilderness lay beneath his feet with the broad round summit of some piece of high ground, rising dark and flat above; and at some distance further, he suddenly turned the angle of the valley, and had the tall grey ruin of Saltwood full before him, with the lines of the trees and meadows sweeping down into the dell, and the bright sky, lustrous with the moonlight, extended broad and unclouded behind. Shortly after, he came to the little stream, rushing in miniature cascades between its hollow banks, and murmuring with a soft and musical voice amongst the roots of the

shrubs, which here and there hid it from the beams.

He paused but a moment or two, however, at any of these things, and then walked on again, till at length he climbed the road leading up to the castle, and passed through the arch-way of the gate. Of the history of the place he knew nothing, but from vague traditions heard in his boyhood; and yet, when he stood amongst those old grey walls, with the high towers rising before him, and the green-sward, covering the decay of centuries, beneath his feet, he could not help feeling a vague impression of melancholy, not unmingled with awe, fall upon him. In the presence of ancient things, the link between all mortality seems most strongly felt. We perceive our association with the dead more strongly. The character and habits of thought of the person, of course, render it a more distinct or obscure perception; but still we all have it. With some, it is as I have before called it, an impression that we must share the same decay, meet the

same fate, fall into the same tomb as those who have raised or produced the things that we behold; for every work of man is but a tomb-stone, if it be read aright. But with others, an audible voice speaks from the grey ruin and the ancient church, from the dilapidated houses where our fathers dwelt or worshipped, and says to every one amongst the living, "As they were, who built us, so must you be. They enjoyed, and hoped, and feared, and suffered. So do you. Where are they gone, with all their thoughts? Where will you go, think you never so highly? All down, down, to the same dust, whither we too are tending. We have seen these things, for ages past, and we shall see more."

I mean not to say that such was exactly the aspect under which those ruins presented themselves to the eye of the man who now visited them. The voice that spoke was not so clear; but yet it was clear enough to make him feel thoughtful if not sad; and he paused to gaze up at the high keep, as the moon shone out upon the old stone-work, showing every loophole and

casement. He was not without imagination in a homely way, and, following the train of thought which the sight of the castle at that hour suggested, he said to himself, "I dare say many a pretty girl has looked out of that window to talk to her lover by the moonlight; and they have grown old, and died like other folks."

How long he would have gone on in this musing mood I cannot tell, but just at that moment the boy who had come down to the beach to call him, appeared from the old doorway of the chapel, and pointing to one of the towers in the wall, whispered—"He's up there, waiting for you."

"Well, then, you run home, young Starlight," replied the smuggler. "I'll be after you in a minute, for he can't have much to say, I should think. Off with you! and no listening, or I'll break your head, youngster."

The boy laughed, and ran away through the gate; and his companion turned towards the angle which he had pointed out. Approaching the wall, he entered what might have been a door, or perhaps a window looking in upon the

court, and communicating with one of those passages which led from tower to tower, with stairs every here and there leading to the battlements. He was obliged to bow his head as he passed; but after climbing a somewhat steep ascent, where the broken steps were half covered with rubbish, he emerged upon the top of the wall, where many a sentinel had kept his weary watch in times long past. At a little distance in advance, standing in the pale moonlight, was a tall, gaunt figure, leaning against a fragment of one of the neighbouring towers; and Harding did not pause to look at the splendour of the view below, though it might well, with its world of wood and meadow, bounded by the glistening sea, have attracted eyes less fond of such scenes than his; but on he walked, straight towards the person before him, who, on his part, hurried forward to meet him, whenever the sound of his step broke upon the ear.

"Good night, Harding," said Mr. Radford, in a low but still harsh tone; "what a time you have been. It will be one o'clock or more before I get back."

"Past two," answered the smuggler, bluntly; "but I came as soon as I could. It is not much more than half an hour since I got your message."

"That stupid boy has been playing the fool, then," replied the other; "I sent him——"

"Oh, he's not stupid," interrupted the smuggler; "and he's not given to play the fool either. More like to play the rogue. But what's the business now, sir? There's no doing anything on such nights as these."

"I know that—I know that," rejoined Radford. "But this will soon change. The moon will be dwindled down to cheese-paring before many days are over, and the barometer is falling. It is necessary that we should make all our arrangements beforehand, Harding, and have everything ready. We must have no more such jobs as the last two."

"I had nothing to do with them," rejoined the smuggler. "You chose your own people, and they failed. I do not mean to say it was their fault, for I don't think it was. They lost as much, for them, as you did; and they did their

best, I dare say; but still that is nothing to me. I've undertaken to land the cargo, and I will do it, if I live. If I die, there's nothing to be said, you know; but I don't say I'll ever undertake another of the sort. It does not answer, Mr. Radford. It makes a man think too much, to know that other people have got so much money staked on such a venture."

"Ay, but that is the very cause why every one should exert himself," answered his companion. "I lost fifty thousand pounds by the last affair, twenty by the other; but I tell you, Harding, I have more than both upon this, and if this fail——"

He paused, and did not finish the sentence; but he set his teeth hard, and seemed to draw his breath with difficulty.

"That's a bad plan," said the smuggler—"a bad plan, in all ways. You wish to make up all at one run; and so you double the venture; but you should know by this time, that one out of four pays very well, and we have seldom failed to do one out of two or three; but the more money people get the more greedy they

are of it; so that because you put three times as much as enough on one freight, you must needs put five times on the other, and ten times on the third, risking a greater loss every time for a greater gain. I'll have to do with no more of these things. I'm contented with little, and don't like such great speculations."

"Oh, if you are afraid," cried Mr. Radford, "you can give it up! I dare say we can find some one else to land the goods."

"As to being afraid, that I am not," answered Harding; "and having undertaken the run, I'll do it. I'm not half so much afraid as you are; for I've not near so much to lose—only my life or liberty and three hundred pounds. But still, Mr. Radford, I do not like to think that if anything goes wrong you'll be so much hurt; and it makes a man feel queer. If I have a few hundreds in a boat, and nothing to lose but myself and a dozen of tubs, I go about it as gay as a lark and as cool and quiet as a dog-fish; but if anything were to go wrong now, why it would be——"

"Ruin—utter ruin!" said Mr. Radford.

"I dare say it would," rejoined the smuggler; "but, nevertheless, your coming down here every other day, and sending for me, does no good, and a great deal of harm. It only teazes me, and sets me always thinking about it, when the best way is not to think at all, but just to do the thing and get it over. Besides, you'll have people noticing your being so often down here, and you'll make them suspect something is going on."

"But it is necessary, my good fellow," answered the other, "that we should settle all our plans. I must have people ready, and horses and help, in case of need."

"Ay, that you must," replied the smuggler, thoughtfully. "I think you said the cargo was light goods."

"Almost all India," said Radford, in return. "Shawls and painted silks, and other things of great value but small bulk. There are a few bales of lace, too; but the whole will require well nigh a hundred horses to carry it, so that we must have a strong muster."

"Ay, and men who fight, too," rejoined

Harding. "You know there are Dragoons down at Folkestone?"

"No!—when did they come?" exclaimed Radford, eagerly. "That's a bad job—that's a bad job! Perhaps they suspect already. Perhaps some of those fellows from the other side have given information, and these soldiers are sent down in consequence—I shouldn't wonder, I shouldn't wonder."

"Pooh—nonsense, Mr. Radford!" replied Harding; "you are always so suspicious. Some day or another you'll suspect me."

"I suspect everybody," cried Radford, vehemently, "and I have good cause. I have known men do such things, for a pitiful gain, as would hang them, if there were any just punishment for treachery."

Harding laughed, but he did not explain the cause of his merriment, though probably he thought that Mr. Radford himself would do many a thing for a small gain, which would not lightly touch his soul's salvation. He soon proceeded, however, to reply, in a grave tone—"That's a bad plan, Mr. Radford. No man is

ever well served by those whom he suspects. He had better never have anything to do with a person he doubts; so, if you doubt me, I'm quite willing to give the business up, for I don't half like it."

"Oh, no!" said Radford, in a smooth and coaxing tone, "I did not mean you, Harding; I know you too well for as honest a fellow as ever lived; but I do doubt those fellows on the other side, and I strongly suspect they peached about the other two affairs. Besides, you said something about Dragoons, and we have not had any of that sort of vermin here for a year or more."

"You frighten yourself about nothing," answered Harding. "There is but a troop of them yet, though they say more are expected. But what good are Dragoons? I have run many a cargo under their very noses, and hope I shall live to run many another. As to stopping this traffic, they are no more good than so many old women!"

"But you must get it all over before the rest come," replied Mr. Radford, in an argumenta-

tive manner, taking hold of the lappel of his companion's jacket; "there's no use of running more risk than needful. And you must remember that we have a long way to carry the goods after they are landed. Then is the most dangerous time,"

"I don't know that," said Harding; "but, however, you must provide for that, and must also look out for *hides** for the things. I wont have any of them down with me; and when I have landed them safely, though I don't mind giving a help to bring them a little way inland, I wont be answerable for anything more."

"No, no; that's all settled," answered his companion; "and the hides are all ready, too. Some can come into my stable, others can be carried up to the willow cave. Then there's Sir Robert's great barn."

"Will Sir Robert consent?" asked Harding, in a doubtful tone. "He would never have anything to do with these matters himself, and

* It may be as well to explain to the uninitiated reader, that the secret places where smugglers conceal their goods after landing, are known by the name of "Hides."

was always devilish hard upon us. I remember he sent my father to gaol ten years ago, when I was a youngster."

"He must consent," replied Radford, sternly. "He dare as soon refuse me as cut off his right hand. I tell you, Harding, I have got him in a vice; and one turn of the lever wi.. ake him cry for mercy when I like. But no more of him. I shall use his barn as if it were my own; and it is in the middle of the wood, you know, so that it's out of sight. But even if it were not for that, we've got many another place. Thank Heaven, there are no want of hides in this county!"

"Ay, but the worst of dry goods, and things of that kind," rejoined the smuggler, "is that they spoil with a little wet, so that one can't sink them in a cut or canal till they are wanted, as one can do with tubs. Who do you intend to send down for them? That's one thing I must know."

"Oh, whoever comes, my son will be with them," answered Mr. Radford. "As to who the others will be, I cannot tell yet. The

Ramleys, certainly, amongst the rest. They are always ready, and will either fight or run, as it may be needed."

"I don't much like them," replied Harding; "they are a bad set. I wish they were hanged, or out of the country; for, as you say, they will either fight, or run, or peach, or anything else that suits them: one just as soon as another."

"Oh, no fear of that—no fear of that!" exclaimed Mr. Radford, in a confident tone, which seemed somewhat strange to the ears of his companion, after the suspicions he had heard him so lately express; but the other instantly added, in explanation, "I shall take care that they have no means of peaching, for I will tell them nothing about it, till they are setting off with fifty or sixty others."

"That's the best way, and the only way with such fellows as that," answered Harding; "but if you tell nobody, you'll find it a hard job to get them all together."

"Only let the day be fixed," said Mr. Radford; "and I'll have all ready—never fear."

"That must be your affair," replied Harding; "I'm ready whenever you like. Give me a dark night and a fair wind, and my part of the job is soon done."

"About this day week, I should think," said Mr. Radford. "The moon will be nearly out by that time."

"Not much more than half," replied the smuggler; "and as we have got to go far,—for the ship, you say, will not stand in,—we had better have the whole night to ourselves. Even a bit of a moon is a bad companion on such a trip; especially when there is so much money risked. No, I think you had better give me three days more: then there will be wellnigh nothing left of her, and she wont rise till three or four. We can see what the weather's like, too, about that time; and I can come up, and let you know. But if you'll take my advice, Mr. Radford, you'll not be coming down here any more, till it's all over at least. There's no good of it, and it may do mischief."

"Well, now it's all settled, I shall not need to do so," rejoined the other; "but I really

don't see, Harding, why you should so much wish me to stay away."

"I'll tell you why, Mr. Radford," said Harding, putting his hands into the pockets of his jacket, "and that very easily. Although you have become a great gentleman, and live at a fine place inland, people haven't forgot when you kept a house and a counting-house too, in Hythe, and all that used to go on in those days; and though you are a magistrate, and go out hunting and shooting, and all that, the good folks about have little doubt that you have a hankering after the old trade yet, only that you do your business on a larger scale than you did then. It's but the other day, when I was in at South's, the grocer's, to talk to him about some stuff he wanted, I heard two men say one to the other, as they saw you pass, 'Ay, there goes old Radford. I wonder what he's down here for!' 'As great an old smuggler as ever lived,' said the other; 'and a pretty penny he's made of it. He's still at it, they say; and I dare say he's down here now upon some such concern.'

So you see, sir, people talk about it, and that's the reason why I say that the less you are here the better."

"Perhaps it is—perhaps it is," answered Mr. Radford, quickly; "and as we've now settled all we can settle, till you come up, I'll take myself home. Good night, Harding—good night!"

"Good night, sir," answered Harding, with something like a smile upon his lip; and finding their way down again to the court below, they parted.

"I don't like that fellow at all," said Mr. Radford to himself, as he walked away upon the road to Hythe, where he had left his horse; "he's more than half inclined to be uncivil. I'll have nothing more to do with him after this is over."

Harding took his way across the fields towards Sandgate, and perhaps his thoughts were not much more complimentary to his companion than Mr. Radford's had been to him; but in the meantime, while each followed his separate course homeward, we must remain for a

short space in the green, moonlight court of Saltwood Castle. All remained still and silent for about three minutes; but then the ivy, which at that time had gathered thickly round the old walls, might be seen to move in the neighbourhood of a small aperture in one of the ruined flanking towers of the outer wall, to which it had at one time probably served as a window, though all traces of its original form were now lost. The tower was close to the spot where Mr. Radford and his companion had been standing; and although the aperture we have mentioned looked towards the court, joining on to a projecting wall in great part overthrown, there was a loop-hole on the other side, flanking the very parapet on which they had carried on their conversation.

After the ivy had moved for a moment, as I have said, something like a human head was thrust out, looking cautiously round the court. The next minute a broad pair of shoulders appeared, and then the whole form of a tall and powerful man, who, after pausing for an instant on the top of the broken wall, used its fragments as a means

of descent to the ground below. Just as he reached the level of the court, one of the loose stones which he had displaced as he came down, rolled after him and fell at his side; and, with a sudden start at the first sound, he laid his hand on the butt of a large horse-pistol stuck in a belt round his waist. As soon as he perceived what it was that had alarmed him, he took his hand from the weapon again, and walked out into the moonlight; and thence, after pacing quietly up and down for two or three minutes, to give time for the two other visitors of the castle to get to a distance, he sauntered slowly out through the gate. He then turned under the walls towards the little wood which at that time occupied a part of the valley; opposite to which he stood gazing for about five minutes. When he judged all safe, he gave a whistle, upon which the form of a boy instantly started out from the trees, and came running across the meadow towards him.

"Have you heard all, Mr. Mowle?" asked the boy in a whisper, as soon as he was near.

"All that they said, Little Starlight," replied the other. "They didn't say enough; but yet

it will do; and you are a clever little fellow. But come along," he added, laying his hand on the boy's shoulder, "you shall have what I promised you, and half-a-crown more; and if you go on, and tell me all you find out, you shall be well paid."

Thus saying, he walked on with the boy towards Hythe, and the scenery round Saltwood resumed its silent solitude again.

CHAPTER VII.

To a very hungry man, it matters not much what is put upon the table, so that it be eatable; but with the intellectual appetite the case is different, and every one is anxious to know who is to be his companion, or what is to be in his book. Now, Sir Edward Digby was somewhat of an epicure in human character; and he always felt as great a curiosity to enjoy any new personage brought before him, as the more ordinary epicure desires to taste a new dish. He was equally refined, too, in regard to the taste of his intellectual food. He liked a good deal of flavour, but not too much: a soupçon of something, he did not well know what, in a man's demeanour

gave it great zest, as a soupçon of two or three condiments so blended in a salmi as to defy analysis must have charmed Vatel; and, to say the truth, the little he had seen or heard of the house in which he now was, together with his knowledge of some of its antecedents, had awakened a great desire for a farther taste of its quality.

When he went down stairs, then, and opened the dining-room door, his eye naturally ran round in search of the new guests. Only two, however, had arrived, in the first of whom he recognised Mr. Zachary Croyland. The other was a venerable looking old man, in black, whom he could not conceive to be Mr. Radford, from the previous account which he had heard of that respectable gentleman's character. It turned out, however, that the person before him—who had been omitted by Sir Robert Croyland in the enumeration of his expected visitors—was the clergyman of the neighbouring village; and being merely a plain, good man, of very excellent sense, but neither, rich noble, nor thrifty, was nobody in the opinion of the baronet.

As soon as Sir Edward Digby appeared, Mr. Zachary Croyland, with his back tall, straight, and stiff as a poker, advanced towards him, and shook him cordially by the hand. "Welcome, welcome, my young friend," he said; "you've kept your word, I see; and that's a good sign of any man, especially when he knows that there's neither pleasure, profit, nor popularity to be gained by so doing; and I'm sure there's none of either to be had in this remote corner of the world. You have some object, of course, in coming among us; for every man has an object; but what it is I can't divine."

"A very great object indeed, my dear sir," replied the young officer, with a smile; "I wish to cultivate the acquaintance of an old friend of my father's—your brother here, who was kind enough to invite me."

"A very unprofitable sort of plant to cultivate," answered Mr. Croyland, in a voice quite loud enough to be heard by the whole room. "It wont pay tillage, I should think; but you know your own affairs best. Here, Edith, my

love, I must make you better acquainted with my young fellow-traveller. Doubtless, he is perfectly competent to talk as much nonsense to you as any other young man about town, and has imported, for the express benefit of the young ladies in the country, all the sweet things and pretty speeches last in vogue. But he can, in his saner moments, and if you just let him know that you are not quite a fool, bestow upon you some small portion of common sense, which he has picked up, Heaven knows how!—He couldn't have it by descent; for he is an eldest son, and that portion of the family property is always reserved for the younger children."

Mrs. Barbara Croyland, who found that her brother Zachary was riding his horse somewhat hard, moved across the room—with the superfluity of whalebone which she had in her stays crackling at every step, as if expressly to attract attention—and, laying her hand on Mr. Croyland's arm, she whispered—"Now do, brother, be a little civil and kind. There's no

use of hurting people's feelings; and, if Robert hasn't as much sense as you, there's no use you should always be telling him so."

"Pish! nonsense!" cried Mr. Croyland, "Hold your tongue, Bab. You're a good soul as ever lived, but a great fool into the bargain. So don't meddle. I should think you had burnt your fingers enough with it by this time."

"And I'm sure you're a good soul, too, if you would but let people know it," replied Mrs. Barbara, anxious to soften and keep down all the little oddities and asperities of her family circle in the eyes of Sir Edward Digby.

But she only showed them the more by so doing; for Mr. Croyland was not to be caught by honey; and, besides, the character which she, in her simplicity, thought fit to attribute to him, was the very last upon the face of the earth which he coveted. Every man has his vanity; and it is an imp that takes an infinite variety of different forms, frequently the most hideous or the most absurd. Now Mr. Croyland's vanity lay in his oddity and acerbity. There was nothing

on earth which he considered so foolish as good-nature; and he was heartily ashamed of the large portion with which Heaven had endowed him.

"I a good soul!" he exclaimed. "Let me tell you, Bab, you are very much mistaken in that, as in every other thing you say or do. I am nothing more nor less than a very cross, ill-tempered old man; and you know it quite well, if you wouldn't be a hypocrite."

"Well, I do believe you are," said the lady, with her own particular vanity mortified into a state of irritation, "and the only way is to let you alone."

While this conversation had been passing between brother and sister, Sir Edward Digby, taking advantage of the position in which they stood, and which masked his own operations from the rest of the party, bent down to speak a few words to Edith, who, whatever they were, looked up with a smile, faint and thoughtful indeed, but still expressing as much cheerfulness as her countenance ever showed. The topic which he spoke upon might be common-

place, but what he said was said with grace, and had a degree of originality in it, mingled with courtliness and propriety of expression, which at once awakened attention and repaid it. It was not strong beer—it was not strong spirit—but it was like some delicate kind of wine, which has more power than the fineness of the flavour suffers to be apparent at the first taste.

Their conversation was not long, however; for by the time that the young gentleman and lady had exchanged a few sentences, and Mr. Croyland had finished his discussion with his sister, the name of Mr. Radford was announced; and Sir Edward Digby turned quickly round to examine the appearance of the new comer. As he did so, however, his eye fell for a moment upon the countenance of Edith Croyland, and he thought he remarked an expression of anxiety not unmingled with pain, till the door closed after admitting a single figure, when a look of relief brightened her face, and she gave a glance across the room to her sister. The younger girl instantly rose; and while her father was busy receiving Mr. Radford with somewhat

profuse attention, she gracefully crossed the room, and seating herself by Edith, laid her hand upon her sister's, whispering something to her with a kindly look.

Sir Edward Digby marked it all, and liked it; for there is something in the bottom of man's heart which has always a sympathy with affection; but he, nevertheless, did not fail to take a complete survey of the personage who entered, and whom I must now present to the reader, somewhat more distinctly than I could do by the moonlight. Mr. Richard Radford was a tall, thin, but large-boned man, with dark eyes and overhanging shaggy brows, a hook nose, considerably depressed towards the point, a mouth somewhat wide, and teeth very fine for his age, though somewhat straggling and shark-like. His hair was very thick, and apparently coarse; his arms long and powerful; and his legs, notwithstanding the meagreness of his body, furnished with very respectable calves. On the whole, he was a striking but not a prepossessing person; and there was a look of keenness and cupidity, we might almost say

voracity, in his eye, with a bend in the brow, which would have given the observer an idea of great quickness of intellect and decision of character, if it had not been for a certain degree of weakness about the partly opened mouth, which seemed to be in opposition to the latter characteristic. He was dressed in the height of the mode, with large buckles in his shoes and smaller ones at his knees, a light dress-sword hanging not ungracefully by his side, and a profusion of lace and embroidery about his apparel.

Mr. Radford replied to the courtesies of Sir Robert Croyland with perfect self-possession—one might almost call it self-sufficiency—but with no grace and some stiffness. He was then introduced, in form, to Sir Edward Digby, bowing low, if that could be called a bow, which was merely an inclination of the rigid spine, from a perpendicular position to an angle of forty-five with the horizon. The young officer's demeanour formed a very striking contrast with that of his new acquaintance, not much in favour of the latter; but he showed that, as Mr.

Croyland had predicated of him, he was quite prepared to say a great many courteous nothings in a very civil and obliging tone. Mr. Radford declared himself delighted at the honour of making his acquaintance, and Sir Edward pronounced himself charmed at the opportunity of meeting him. Mr. Radford hoped that he was going to honour their poor place for a considerable length of time, and Sir Edward felt sure that the beauty of such scenery, and the delights of such society, would be the cause of much pain to him when he was compelled to tear himself away.

A low but merry laugh from behind them, caused both the gentlemen to turn their heads; and they found the sparkling eyes of Zara Croyland fixed upon them. She instantly dropped her eye-lids, however, and coloured a little, at being detected. It was evident enough that she had been weighing the compliments she heard, and estimating them at their right value, which made Mr. Radford look somewhat angry, but elicited nothing from Sir Edward Digby but a gay glance at the beautiful little

culprit, which she caught, even through the thick lashes of her downcast eyes, and which served to reassure her.

Sir Robert Croyland himself was displeased; but Zara was in a degree a spoiled child, and had established for herself a privilege of doing what she liked, unscolded. To turn the conversation, therefore, Sir Robert, in a tone of great regard, inquired particularly after his young friend, Richard, and said, he hoped that they were to have the pleasure of seeing him.

"I trust so—I trust so, Sir Robert," replied Mr. Radford; "but you know I am totally unacquainted with his movements. He had gone away upon some business, the servants told me; and I waited as long as I could for him; but I did not choose to keep your dinner, Sir Robert; and if he does not choose to come in time, the young dog must go without. — Pray do not stop a moment for him."

"Business!" muttered Mr. Croyland—"either cheating the king's revenue, or making love to

a milkmaid, I'll answer for him;" but the remark passed unnoticed, for Sir Robert Croyland, who was always anxious to drown his brother's somewhat too pertinent observations, without giving the nabob any offence, was loudly pressing Mr. Radford to let them wait for half an hour, in order to give time for the young gentleman's arrival.

His father, however, would not hear of such a proceeding; and the bell was rung, and dinner ordered. It was placed upon the table with great expedition; and the party moved towards the dining-room. Mr. Radford handed in the baronet's sister, who was, to say the truth, an enigma to him; for he himself could form no conception of her good-nature, simplicity, and kindness, and consequently thought that all the mischief she occasionally caused, must originate in well-concealed spite, which gave him a great reverence for her character. Sir Edward Digby, notwithstanding a hint from Sir Robert to take in his youngest daughter, advanced to Miss Croyland, and secured her, as he thought, for himself; while the brother of

the master of the house followed with the fair Zara, leaving the clergyman and Sir Robert to come together. By a manœuvre on the part of Edith, however, favoured by her father, but nearly frustrated by the busy spirit of her aunt, Miss Croyland got placed between Sir Robert and the clergyman, while the youngest daughter of the house was seated by Sir Edward Digby, leaving a chair vacant between herself and her worthy parent for young Radford, when he should arrive.

All this being arranged, to the satisfaction of everybody but Sir Edward Digby, grace was said, after a not very decent hint from Sir Robert Croyland, that it ought not to be too long; and the dinner commenced with the usual attack upon soup and fish. It must not be supposed, however, because we have ventured to say that the arrangement was not to the satisfaction of Sir Edward Digby, that the young baronet was at all disinclined to enjoy his pretty little friend's society nearer than the opposite side of the table. Nor must it be imagined that his sage reflections, in regard to keeping himself out of

danger, had at all made a coward of the gallant soldier. The truth is, he had a strong desire to study Edith Croyland: not on account of any benefit which that study could be of to himself, but with other motives and views, which, upon the whole, were very laudable. He wished to see into her mind, and, by those slight indications which were all he could expect her to display —but which, nevertheless, to a keen observer, often tell a history better than a whole volume of details—to ascertain some facts, in regard to which he took a considerable interest. Being somewhat eager in his way, and not knowing how long he might find it either convenient or safe to remain in his present quarters, he had determined to commence the campaign as soon as possible; but, frustrated in his first attack, he determined to change his plan of operations, and besiege the fair Zara as one of the enemy's outworks. He accordingly laughed and talked with her upon almost every subject in the world during the first part of dinner, skilfully leading her up to the pursuits of her sister and herself in the country, in order to obtain a

clear knowledge of their habits and course of proceeding, that he might take advantage of it at an after-period, for purposes of his own.

The art of conversation, when properly regarded, forms a regular system of tactics, in which, notwithstanding the various manœuvres of your adversary, and the desultory fire kept up by indifferent persons around, you still endeavour to carry the line of advance in the direction that you wish, and to frustrate every effort to turn it towards any point that may not be agreeable to you, rallying it here, giving it a bend there; presenting a sharp angle at one place, an obtuse one at another; and raising from time to time a barrier or a breastwork for the purpose of preventing the adverse force from turning your flank, and getting into your rear.

But the mischief was, in the present instance, that Sir Edward Digby's breastworks were too low for such an active opponent as Zara Croyland. They might have appeared a formidable obstacle in the way of a scientific opponent; but with all the rash valour of youth, which is

so frequently successful where practice and experience fail, she walked straight up, and jumped over them, taking one line after another, till Sir Edward Digby found that she had nearly got into the heart of his camp. It was all so easy and natural, however, so gay and cheerful, that he could not feel mortified, even at his own want of success; and though five times she darted away from the subject, and began to talk of other things, he still renewed it, expatiating upon the pleasures of a country life, and upon how much more rational, as well as agreeable it was, when compared to the amusements and whirl of the town.

Mr. Zachary Croyland, indeed, cut across them often, listening to what they said and sometimes smiling significantly at Sir Edward Digby, or at other times replying himself to what either of the two thought fit to discourse upon. Thus, then, when the young baronet was descanting sagely of the pleasures of the country, as compared with those of the town, good Mr. Croyland laughed merrily, saying, "You will soon have enough of it, Sir

Edward; or else you are only deceiving that poor foolish girl; for what have you to do with the country?—you, who have lived the best part of your life in cities, and amongst their denizens. I dare say, if the truth were told now, you would give a guinea to be walking up the Mall, instead of sitting down here, in this old, crumbling, crazy house, speaking courteous nonsense to a pretty little milk-maid."

"Indeed, my dear sir, you are very much mistaken," replied Sir Edward, gravely. "You judge all men by yourself; and because you are fond of cities, and the busy haunts of men, you think I must be so too."

"I fond of cities and the busy haunts of men!" cried Mr. Croyland, in a tone of high indignation; but a laugh that ran round the table, and in which even the worthy clergyman joined, shewed the old gentleman that he had been taken in by Sir Edward's quietly-spoken jest; and at the same time his brother exclaimed, still laughing, "He hit you fairly there, Zachary. He has found out the full

extent of your love for your fellow-creatures already."

"Well, I forgive him, I forgive him!" said Mr. Croyland, with more good humour than might have been expected. "I had forgotten that I had told him, four or five days ago, my hatred for all cities, and especially for that great mound of greedy emmets, which, unfortunately, is the capital of this country. I declare I never go into that vast den of iniquity, and mingle with the stream of wretched-looking things that call themselves human, which all its doors are hourly vomiting forth, but they put me in mind of the white ants in India, just the same squalid-looking, active, and voracious vermin as themselves, running over everything that obstructs them, intruding themselves everywhere, destroying everything that comes in their way, and acting as an incessant torment to every one within reach. Certainly, the white ants are the less venemous of the two races, and somewhat prettier to look at; but still there's a wonderful resemblance."

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"I don't at all approve of your calling me a milkmaid, uncle," said Zara, shaking her small delicate finger at Mr. Croyland, across the table. "It's very wrong and ungrateful of you. See if ever I milk your cow for you again!"

"Then I'll milk it myself, my dear," replied Mr. Croyland, with a good-humoured smile at his fair niece.

"You cannot, you cannot!" cried Zara. "Fancy, Sir Edward, what a picture it made when one day I went over to my uncle's, and found him with a frightful-looking black man, in a turban, whom he brought over from Heaven knows where, trying to milk a cow he had just bought, and neither of them able to manage it. My uncle was kneeling upon his cocked hat, amongst the long grass, looking, as he acknowledges, like a kangaroo; the cow had got one of her feet in the pail, kicking most violently; and the black man with a white turban round his head, was upon both his knees before her, beseeching her in some heathen language to be quiet. It was the finest sight I ever saw, and would have made a beautiful picture of the Worship of the

Cow,' which is, as I am told, customary in the country where both the gentlemen came from."

"Zara, my dear — Zara!" cried Mrs. Barbara, who was frightened to death lest her niece should deprive herself of all share in Mr. Croyland's fortune. "You really should not tell such a story of your uncle."

But the worthy gentleman himself was laughing till the tears ran down his cheeks. "It's quite true—it's quite true!" he exclaimed, "and she did milk the cow, though we couldn't. The ill-tempered devil was as quiet as a lamb with her, though she is so vicious with every male thing, that I have actually been obliged to have a woman in the cottage within a hundred yards of the house, for the express purpose of milking her."

"That's what you should have done at first," said Mr. Radford, putting down the fork with which he had been diligently devouring a large plateful of fish. "Instead of having nothing but men about you, you should have had none but your coachman and footman, and all the rest women."

"Ay, and married my cook-maid," replied Mr. Croyland, sarcastically.

Sir Robert Croyland looked down into his plate with a quivering lip and a heavy brow, as if he did not well know whether to laugh or be angry. The clergyman smiled, Mr. Radford looked furious, but said nothing, and Mrs. Barbara exclaimed, "Oh, brother, you should not say such things! and besides, there are many cook-maids who are very nice, pretty, respectable people."

"Well, sister, I'll think of it," said Mr. Croyland, drily, but with a good deal of fun twinkling in the corners of his eyes.

It was too much for the light heart of Zara Croyland; and holding down her head, she laughed outright, although she knew that Mr. Radford had placed himself in the predicament of which her uncle spoke, though he had been relieved of the immediate consequence for some years.

What would have been the result is difficult to say; for Mr. Radford was waxing wroth; but at that moment the door was flung hastily open,

and a young gentleman entered, of some three or four-and-twenty years of age, bearing a strong resemblance to Mr. Radford, though undoubtedly of a much more pleasant and graceful appearance. He was well dressed, and his coat, lined with white silk of the finest texture, was cast negligently back from his chest, with an air of carelessness which was to be traced in all the rest of his apparel. Everything he wore was as good as it could be, and everything became him; for he was well formed, and his movements were free and even graceful; but everything seemed to have been thrown on in a hurry, and his hair floated wild and straggling round his brow, as if neither comb nor brush had touched it for many hours. It might have been supposed that this sort of disarray proceeded from haste when he found himself too late and his father gone; but there was an expression of reckless indifference about his face which led Sir Edward Digby to imagine that this apparent negligence was the habitual characteristic of his mind, rather than the effect of any accidental circumstance. His air was quite self-possessed, though hurried;

and a flashing glance of his eye round the table, resting for a moment longer on Sir Edward Digby than on any one else, seemed directed to ascertain whether the party assembled was one that pleased him, before he chose to sit down to the board with them. He made no apology to Sir Robert Croyland for being too late, but shook hands with him in return for the very cordial welcome he met with, and then seated himself in the vacant chair, nodding to Miss Croyland familiarly, and receiving a cold inclination of the head in return. One of the servants inquired if he would take soup and fish; but he replied, abruptly, "No; bring me fish. No soup—I hate such messes."

In the meantime, by one of those odd turns which sometimes take place in conversation, Mr. Croyland, the clergyman, and Mr. Radford himself were once more talking together: the latter having apparently overcome his indignation at the nabob's tart rejoinder, in the hope and expectation of saying something still more biting to him in return. Like many a great general, however, he had not justly appreciated

the power of his adversary as compared with his own strength. Mr. Croyland, soured at an early period of life, had acquired by long practice and experience a habit of repartee when his prejudices or his opinions (and they are very different things) were assailed, which was overpowering. A large fund of natural kindness and good humour formed a curious substratum for the acerbity which had accumulated above it, and his love of a joke would often shew itself in a hearty peal of laughter, even at his own expense, when the attack upon him was made in a good spirit, by one for whom he had any affection or esteem. But if he despised or disliked his assailant, as was the case with Mr. Radford, the bitterest possible retort was sure to be given in the fewest possible words.

In order to lead away from the obnoxious subject, the clergyman returned to Mr. Croyland's hatred of London, saying, not very advisedly perhaps, just as young Mr. Radford entered, "I cannot imagine, my dear sir, why you have such an animosity to our magnificent capital, and to all that it contains, especially

when we all know you to be as beneficent to individuals as you are severe upon the species collectively."

"My dear Cruden, you'll only make a mess of it," replied Mr. Croyland. "The reason why I do sometimes befriend a poor scoundrel whom I happen to know, is because it is less pleasant for me to see a rascal suffer than to do what's just by him. I have no will and no power to punish all the villany I see, otherwise my arm would be tired enough of flogging, in this county of Kent. But I do not understand why I should be called upon to like a great agglomeration of blackguards in a city, when I can have the same diluted in the country. Here we have about a hundred scoundrels to the square mile; in London we have a hundred to the square yard."

"Don't you think, sir, that they may be but the worse scoundrels in the country because they are fewer?" demanded Mr. Radford.

"I am beginning to fancy so," answered Mr. Croyland, drily, "but I suppose in London the number makes up for the want of intensity."

"Well, it's a very fine city," rejoined Mr.

Radford; "the emporium of the world, the nurse of arts and sciences, the birth-place and the theatre of all that is great and majestic in the efforts of human intellect."

"And equally of all that is base and vile," answered his opponent; "it is the place to which all smuggled goods naturally tend, Radford. Every uncustomed spirit, every prohibited ware, physical and intellectual, there finds its mart; and the chief art that is practised is to cheat as cleverly as may be — the chief science learned, is how to defraud without being detected. We are improving in the country, daily—daily; but we have not reached the skill of London yet. Men make large fortunes in the country in a few years by merely cheating the Customs; but in London they make large fortunes in a few months by cheating everybody."

"So they do in India," replied Mr. Radford, who thought he had hit the tender place.

"True, true!" cried Mr. Croyland; "and then we go and set up for country gentlemen, and cheat still. What rogues we are, Radford!—eh? I see you know the world. It is very well

for me to say, I made all my money by curing men, not by robbing them. Never you believe it, my good friend. It is not in human nature, is it? No, no! tell that to the marines. No man ever made a fortune but by plunder, that's a certain fact."

The course of Sir Robert Croyland's dinner-party seemed to promise very pleasantly at this juncture; but Sir Edward Digby, though somewhat amused, was not himself fond of sharp words, and had some compassion upon the ladies at the table. He therefore stepped in; and, without seeming to have noticed that there was anything passing between Mr. Radford and the brother of his host, except the most delicate courtesies, he contrived, by some well-directed questions in regard to India, to give Mr. Croyland an inducement to deviate from the sarcastic into the expatiative; and having set him cantering upon one of his hobbies, he left him to finish his excursion, and returned to a conversation which had been going on between him and the fair Zara, in somewhat of a low tone, though not so low as to show any mutual design of keeping it

from the ears of those around. Young Radford had in the meantime been making up for the loss of time occasioned by his absence at the commencement of dinner, and he seemed undoubtedly to have a prodigious appetite. Not a word had passed from father to son, or son to father; and a stranger might have supposed them in no degree related to each other. Indeed, the young gentleman had hitherto spoken to nobody but the servant; and while his mouth was employed in eating, his quick, large eyes were directed to every face round the table in succession, making several more tours than the first investigating glance, which I have already mentioned, and every time stopping longer at the countenance of Sir Edward Digby than anywhere else. He now, however, seemed inclined to take part in that officer's conversation with the youngest Miss Croyland, and did not appear quite pleased to find her attention so completely engrossed by a stranger. To Edith he vouchsafed not a single word; but hearing the fair lady next to him reply to something which Sir Edward Digby had said, "Oh, we go out once or twice almost every day;

sometimes on horseback; but more frequently to take a walk," he exclaimed, "Do you, indeed, Miss Zara?—why, I never meet you, and I am always running about the country. How is that, I wonder?"

Zara smiled, and replied, with an arch look, "Because fortune befriends us, I suppose, Mr. Radford;" but then, well knowing that he was not one likely to take a jest in good part, she added—"we don't go out to meet anybody, and therefore always take those paths where we are least likely to do so."

Still young Radford did not seem half to like her reply; but, nevertheless, he went on in the same tone, continually interrupting her conversation with Sir Edward Digby, and endeavouring, after a fashion not at all uncommon, to make himself agreeable by preventing people from following the course they are inclined to pursue. The young baronet rather humoured him than otherwise, for he wished to see as deeply as possible into his character. He asked him to drink wine with him; he spoke to him once or twice without being called upon to do

so; and he was somewhat amused to see that the fair Zara was a good deal annoyed at the encouragement he gave to her companion on the left to join in their conversation.

He was soon satisfied, however, in regard to the young man's mind and character. Richard Radford had evidently received what is called a good education, which is, in fact, no education at all. He had been taught a great many things; he knew a good deal; but that which really and truly constitutes education was totally wanting. He had not learned how to make use of that which he had acquired, either for his own benefit or for that of society. He had been instructed, not educated, and there is the greatest possible difference between the two. He was shrewd enough, but selfish and conceited to a high degree, with a sufficient portion of pride to be offensive, with sufficient vanity to be irritable, with all the wilfulness of a spoiled child, and with that confusion of ideas in regard to plain right and wrong, which is always consequent upon the want of moral training and over-indulgence in youth. To judge from his own

conversation, the whole end and aim of his life seemed to be excitement; he spoke of field sports with pleasure; but the degree of satisfaction which he derived from each, appeared to be always in proportion to the danger, the activity, and the fierceness. Hunting he liked better than shooting, shooting than fishing, which latter he declared was only tolerable because there was nothing else to be done in the spring of the year. But upon the pleasures of the chase he would dilate largely, and he told several anecdotes of staking a magnificent horse here, and breaking the back of another there, till poor Zara turned somewhat pale, and begged him to desist from such themes.

"I cannot think how men can be so barbarous," she said. "Their whole pleasure seems to consist in torturing poor animals or killing them."

Young Radford laughed. "What were they made for?" he asked.

"To be used by man, I think, not to be tortured by him," the young lady replied.

"No torture at all," said her companion on the left. "The horse takes as much pleasure in running after the hounds as I do, and if he breaks his back, or I break my neck, it's our own fault. We have nobody to thank for it but ourselves. The very chance of killing oneself gives additional pleasure; and, when one pushes a horse at a leap, the best fun of the whole is the thought whether he will be able by any possibility to clear it or not. If it were not for hunting, and one or two other things of the sort, there would be nothing left for an English gentleman, but to go to Italy and put himself at the head of a party of banditti. That must be glorious work!"

"Don't you think, Mr. Radford," asked Sir Edward Digby, "that active service in the army might offer equal excitement, and a more honourable field?"

"Oh, dear no!" cried the young man. "A life of slavery compared with a life of freedom; to be drilled and commanded, and made a mere machine of, and sent about relieving guards and pickets, and doing everything that one is told like a school-boy! I would not go into the

army for the world. I'm sure if I did I should shoot my commanding officer within a month!"

"Then I would advise you not," answered the young baronet, "for after the shooting there would be another step to be taken which would not be quite so pleasant."

"Oh, you mean the hanging," cried young Radford, laughing; "but I would take care they should never hang me; for I could shoot myself as easily as I could shoot him; and I have a great dislike to strangulation. It's one of the few sorts of death that would not please me."

"Come, come, Richard!" said Sir Robert Croyland, in a nervous and displeased tone; "let us talk of some other subject. You will frighten the ladies from table before the cloth is off."

"It is very odd," said young Radford, in a low voice, to Sir Edward Digby, without making any reply to the master of the house—"it is very odd, how frightened old men are at the very name of death, when at the best they can have but two or three years to live."

The young officer did not reply, but turned the conversation to other things; and the wine having been liberally supplied, operated as it usually does, at the point where its use stops short of excess, in "making glad the heart of man;" and the conclusion of the dinner was much more cheerful and placable than the commencement.

The ladies retired within a few minutes after the desert was set upon the table; and it soon became evident to Sir Edward Digby, that the process of deep drinking, so disgracefully common in England at that time, was about to commence. He was by no means incapable of bearing as potent libations as most men; for occasionally, in those days, it was scarcely possible to escape excess without giving mortal offence to your entertainer; but it was by no means either his habit or his inclination so to indulge, and for this evening especially he was anxious to escape. He looked, therefore, across the table to Mr. Croyland for relief; and that gentleman, clearly understanding what he meant, gave him a slight nod, and finished his first

glass of wine after dinner. The bottles passed round again, and Mr. Croyland took his second glass; but after that he rose without calling much attention: a proceeding which was habitual with him. When, however, Sir Edward Digby followed his example, there was a general outcry. Every one declared it was too bad, and Sir Robert said, in a somewhat mortified tone, that he feared his wine was not so good as that to which his guest had been accustomed.

"It is only too good, my dear sir," replied the young baronet, determined to cut the matter short, at once and for ever. "So good, indeed, that I have been induced to take two more glasses than I usually indulge in, and I consequently feel somewhat heated and uncomfortable. I shall go and refresh myself by a walk through your woods."

Several more efforts were made to induce him to stay; but he was resolute in his course; and Mr. Croyland also came to his aid, exclaiming, "Pooh, nonsense, Robert! let every man do as he likes. Have not I heard you, a thousand times, call your house Liberty Hall?

A pretty sort of liberty, indeed, if a man must get beastly drunk because you choose to do so !"

"I do not intend to do any such thing, brother," replied Sir Robert, somewhat sharply; and in the meanwhile, during this discussion, Sir Edward Digby made his escape from the room.

CHAPTER VIII.

On entering the drawing-room, towards which Sir Edward Digby immediately turned his steps, he found it tenanted alone by Mrs. Barbara Croyland, who sat in the window with her back towards the door, knitting most diligently, with something pinned to her knee. As it was quite beyond the good lady's conception that any body would ever think of quitting the dining-room so early but her younger brother, no sooner did she hear a step than, jumping at conclusions as she usually did, she exclaimed aloud, "Isn't he a nice young man, brother Zachary? I think it will do quite well, if that——"

Sir Edward Digby would have given a great

deal to hear the conclusion of the sentence; but his honour was as bright as his sword; and he never took advantage of a mistake. "It is not your brother, Mrs. Croyland," he said; and then Mrs. Barbara starting up with a face like scarlet, tearing her gown at the same time by the tug she gave to the pin which attached her work to her knee, he added, with the most benevolent intentions, "I think he might have been made a very nice young man, if he had been properly treated in his youth. But I should imagine he was very wild and headstrong now."

Mrs. Barbara stared at him with a face full of wonder and confusion; for her own mind was so completely impressed with the subject on which she had begun to speak, that she by no means comprehended the turn that he intended to give it, but thought that he also was talking of himself, and not of young Radford. How it would have ended, no mere mortal can tell; for when once Mrs. Barbara got into a scrape, she floundered most awfully. Luckily, however, her brother was close enough behind

Sir Edward Digby to hear all that passed, and he entered the room while the consternation was still fresh upon his worthy sister's countenance.

After gazing at her for a moment, with a look of sour merriment, Mr. Croyland exclaimed, "There! hold your tongue, Bab; you can't get your fish out of the kettle without burning your fingers!—Now, my young friend," he continued, taking Sir Edward Digby by the arm, and drawing him aside, "if you choose to be a great fool, and run the risk of falling in love with a pretty girl, whom my sister Barbara has determined you shall marry, whether you like it or not, and who herself, dear little soul, has no intention in the world but of playing you like a fish till you are caught, and then laughing at you, you will find the two girls walking in the wood behind the house, as they do every day. But if you don't like such amusement, you can stay here with me and Bab, and be instructed by her in the art and mystery of setting everything to wrongs with the very best intentions in the world."

"Thank you, my dear sir," replied Sir Edward, smiling, "I think I should prefer the

fresh air; and, as to the dangers against which you warn me, I have no fears. The game of coquetry can be played by two."

"Ay, but woe to him who loses!" said Mr. Croyland, in a more serious tone. "But go along with you—go along! You are a rash young man; and if you will court your fate, you must."

The young baronet accordingly walked away, leaving Mrs. Barbara to recover from her confusion as she best might, and Mr. Croyland to scold her at his leisure, which Sir Edward did not in the slightest degree doubt he would do. It was a beautiful summer's afternoon in the end of August, the very last day of the month, the hour about a quarter to six, so that the sun had nearly to run a twelfth part of his course before the time of his setting. It was warm and cheerful, too, but with a freshness in the air, and a certain golden glow over the sky, which told that it was evening. Not wishing exactly to pass before the dining-room windows, Sir Edward endeavoured to find his way out into the wood behind the house by the stable

and farm yards; but he soon found himself in a labyrinth from which it was difficult to extricate himself, and in the end was obliged to have recourse to a stout country lad, who was walking up towards the mansion, with a large pail of milk tugging at his hand, and bending in the opposite direction to balance the load. Right willingly, however, the youth set down the pail; and, leaving it to the tender mercies of some pigs, who were walking about in the yard and did not fail to inquire into the nature of its contents, he proceeded to show the way through the flower and kitchen gardens, by a small door in the wall, to a path which led out at once amongst the trees.

Now, Sir Edward Digby had not the slightest idea of which way the two young ladies had gone; and it was by no means improbable that, if he were left without pilotage in going and returning, he might lose his way in the wood, which, as I have said, was very extensive. But all true lovers are fond of losing their way; and as he had his sword by his side, he had not the slightest objection to that characteristic of an

Amadis, having in reality a good deal of the knight-errant about him, and rather liking a little adventure, if it did not go too far. His adventures, indeed, were not destined that night to be very remarkable; for, following the path about a couple of hundred yards, he was led directly into a good, broad, sandy road, in which he thought it would be impossible to go astray. A few clouds that passed over the sky from time to time cast their fitful and fanciful shadows upon the way; the trees waved on either hand; and, with a small border of green turf, the yellow path pursued its course through the wood, forming a fine but pleasant contrast in colour with the verdure of all the other things around. As he went on, too, the sky overhead, and the shades amongst the trees, began to assume a rosy hue as the day declined farther and farther; and the busy little squirrels, as numerous as mice, were seen running here and there up the trees and along the branches, with their bright black eyes staring at the stranger with a saucy activity very little mingled with fear. The young

baronet was fond of such scenes, and fond of the somewhat grave musing which they very naturally inspire; and he therefore went on, alternately pondering and admiring, and very well contented with his walk, whether he met with his fair friends or not. Sir Edward, indeed, would not allow himself to fancy that he was by any means very anxious for Zara's company, or for Miss Croyland's either—for he was not in the slightest hurry either to fall in love or to acknowledge it to himself even if he were. With regard to Edith, indeed, he felt himself in no possible danger; for had he continued to think her, as he had done at first, more beautiful than her sister—which by this time he did not—he was still guarded in her case by feelings, which, to a man of his character, were as a triple shield of brass, or anything a great deal stronger.

He walked on, however, and he walked on; not, indeed, with a very slow pace, but with none of the eager hurry of youth after beauty; till at length, when he had proceeded for about half an hour, he saw cultivated fields and hedgerows at

the end of the road he was pursuing, and soon after came to the open country, without meeting with the slightest trace of Sir Robert Croyland's daughters.

On the right hand, as he issued out of the wood, there was a small but very neat and picturesque cottage, with its little kitchen-garden and its flower-garden, its wild roses, and its vine.

"I have certainly missed them," said Sir Edward Digby to himself, "and I ought to make the best use of my time, for it wont do to stay here too long. Perhaps they may have gone into the cottage. Girls like these often seek an object in their walk, and visit this poor person or that;" and thus thinking, he advanced to the little gate, went into the garden, and knocked with his knuckles at the door of the house. A woman's voice bade him come in; and, doing so, he found a room, small in size, but corresponding in neatness and cleanliness with the outside of the place. It was tenanted by three persons—a middle-aged woman, dressed as a widow, with a fine and placid countenance, who was advancing towards the door as he entered; a very

lovely girl of eighteen or nineteen, who bore a strong resemblance to the widow; and a stout, powerful, good-looking man, of about thirty, well dressed, though without any attempt at the appearance of a station above the middle class, with a clean, fine, checked shirt, having the collar cast back, and a black silk handkerchief tied lightly in what is usually termed a sailor's knot. The two latter persons were sitting very close together, and the girl was smiling gaily at something her companion had just said.

"Two lovers!" thought the young baronet; but, as that was no business of his, he went on to inquire of the good woman of the house, if she had seen some young ladies pass that way; and having named them, he added, to escape scandal, "I am staying at the house, and am afraid, if I do not meet with them, I shall not easily find my way back."

"They were here a minute ago, sir," replied the widow, "and they went round to the east. They will take the Halden road back, I suppose. If you make haste, you will catch them easily."

"But which is the Halden road, my good lady?" asked Sir Edward Digby; and she, turning to the man who was sitting by her daughter, said, "I wish you would shew the gentleman, Mr. Harding."

The man rose cheerfully enough—considering the circumstances—and led the young baronet with a rapid step, by a footpath that wound round the edge of the wood, to another broad road about three hundred yards distant from that by which the young officer had come. Then, pointing with his hand, he said, "There they are, going as slow as a Dutch butter-tub. You can't miss them, or the road either; for it leads straight on."

Sir Edward Digby thanked him, and walked forward. A few rapid steps brought him close to the two ladies, who—though they looked upon every part of the wood as more or less their home, and consequently felt no fear—turned at the sound of a footfall so near; and the younger of the two smiled gaily, when she saw who it was.

"What! Sir Edward Digby!" she ex-

claimed. "In the name of all that is marvellous, how did you escape from the dining-room? Why, you will be accused of shirking the bottle, cowardice, and milksopism, and crimes and misdemeanours enough to forfeit your commission."

She spoke gaily; but Sir Edward Digby thought that the gaiety was not exactly sterling; for when first she turned, her face had been nearly as grave as her sister's. He answered, however, in the same tone, "I must plead guilty to all such misdemeanours; but if they are to be rewarded by such pleasure as that of a walk with you, I fear I shall often commit them."

"You must not pay us courtly compliments, Sir Edward," said Miss Croyland, "for we poor country people do not understand them. I hope, however, you left the party peaceable; for it promised to be quite the contrary at one time, and my uncle and Mr. Radford never agree."

"Oh, quite peaceable, I can assure you," replied Digby. "I retreated under cover of

your uncle's movements. Perhaps, otherwise, I might not have got away so easily. He it was who told me where I should find you."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Miss Croyland, in a tone of surprise; and then, casting down her eyes, she fell into thought. Her sister, however, carried on the conversation in her stead, saying, "Well, you are the first soldier, Sir Edward, I ever saw, who left the table before night."

"They must have been soldiers who had seen little service, I should think," replied the young officer; "for a man called upon often for active exertion, soon finds the necessity of keeping any brains he has got as clear as possible, in case they should be needed. In many countries where I have been, too, we could get no wine to drink, even if we wanted it. Such was the case in Canada, and in some parts of Germany."

"Have you served in Canada?" demanded Miss Croyland suddenly, raising her eyes to his face with a look of deep interest.

"Through almost the whole of the war," replied Sir Edward Digby, quietly, without

noticing, even by a glance, the change of expression which his words had produced. He then paused for a moment, as if waiting for some other question; but both Miss Croyland and her sister remained perfectly silent, and the former turned somewhat pale.

As he saw that neither of his two fair companions were likely to carry the conversation a step further, the young officer proceeded, in a quiet and even light tone—"This part of the country," he continued, "is always connected in my mind with Canada; and, indeed, I was glad to accept your father's invitation at once, when he was kind enough to ask me to his house; for, in addition to the pleasure of making his personal acquaintance, I longed to see scenes which I had often heard mentioned with all the deep affection and delight which only can be felt by a fine mind for the spot in which our brighter years are passed."

The younger girl looked to her sister, but Edith Croyland was deadly pale, and said nothing; and Zara inquired in a tone to which she too evidently laboured to give the gay

character of her usual demeanour, "Indeed, Sir Edward! May I ask who gave you such a flattering account of our poor country? He must have been a very foolish and prejudiced person—at least, so I fear you must think, now you have seen it."

"No, no!—oh, no!" cried Digby, earnestly, "anything but that. I had that account from a person so high-minded, so noble, so full of every generous quality of heart, and every fine quality of mind, that I was quite sure, ere I came here, I should find the people whom he mentioned, and the scenes which he described, all that he had stated; and I have not been disappointed, Miss Croyland."

"But you have not named him, Sir Edward," said Zara; "you are very tantalizing. Perhaps we may know him, and be sure we shall love him for his patriotism."

"He was an officer in the regiment to which I then belonged," answered the young baronet, "and my dearest friend. His name was Layton—a most distinguished man, who had already gained such a reputation, that, had his rank in the army

admitted it, none could have been more desired to take the command of the forces when Wolfe fell on the heights of Abraham. He was too young, however, and had too little interest to obtain that position.—Miss Croyland, you seem ill. Let me give you my arm."

Edith bowed her head quietly, and leaned upon her sister, but answered not a word; and Zara gave a glance to Sir Edward Digby which he read aright. It was a meaning, a sort of relying and imploring look, as if she would have said, "I beseech you, say no more; she cannot bear it." And the young officer abruptly turned the conversation, observing, "The day has been very hot, Miss Croyland. You have walked far, and over-fatigued yourself."

"It is nothing—it is nothing," answered Edith, with a deep-drawn breath; "it will be past in a moment, Sir Edward. I am frequently thus."

"Too frequently," murmured Zara, gazing at her sister; and Sir Edward Digby replied, "I am sure, if such be the case, you should consult some physician."

Zara shook her head with a melancholy smile, while her sister walked on, leaning upon her arm in silence, with her eyes bent towards the ground, as if in deep thought. "I fear that no physician would do her good," said the younger lady, in a low voice; "the evil is now confirmed."

"Nay," replied Digby, gazing at her, "I think I know one who could cure her entirely."

His look said more than his words; and Zara fixed her eyes upon his face for an instant with an inquiring glance. The expression then suddenly changed to one of bright intelligence, and she answered, "I will make you give me his name to-morrow, Sir Edward. Not now—not now! I shall forget it."

Sir Edward Digby was not slow in taking a hint; and he consequently made no attempt to bring the conversation back to the subject which had so much affected Miss Croyland; but lest a dead silence should too plainly mark that he saw into the cause of the faintness which had come over her, he went on talking to her sister; and Zara soon resumed, at least to all appearance, her own light spirits again.

But Digby had seen her under a different aspect, which was known to few besides her sister; and to say the truth, though he had thought her sparkling frankness very charming, yet the deeper and tenderer feelings which she had displayed towards Edith were still more to his taste.

"She is not the light coquette her uncle represents her," he thought, as they walked on: "there is a true and feeling heart beneath—one whose affections, if strongly excited and then disappointed, might make her as sad and cheerless as this other poor girl."

He had not much time to indulge either in such meditations or in conversation with his fair companion; for, when they were within about a mile of the house, old Mr. Croyland was seen advancing towards them with his usual brisk air and quick pace.

"Well, young people, well," he said, coming forward, "I bring the soberness of age to temper the lightness of youth."

"Oh, we are all very sober, uncle," replied Zara. "It is only those who stay in the house drinking wine who are otherwise."

"I have not been drinking wine, saucy girl," answered Mr. Croyland; "but come, Edith, I want to speak with you; and, as the road is too narrow for four, we'll pair off, as the rascals who ruin the country in the House of Commons term it. Troop on, Miss Zara. There's a gallant cavalier who will give you his arm, doubtless, if you will ask it."

"Indeed I shall do no such thing," replied the fair lady, walking on; and, while Edith and her uncle came slowly after, Sir Edward Digby and the youngest Miss Croyland proceeded on their way, remaining silent for some minutes, though each, to say the truth, was busily thinking how the conversation which had been interrupted might best be renewed. It was Zara who spoke first, however, looking suddenly up in her companion's face with one of her bright and sparkling smiles, and saying, "It is a strange house, is it not, Sir Edward? and we are a strange family?"

"Nay, I do not see that," replied the young officer. "With every new person whose acquaintance we make, we are like a traveller for the first

time in a foreign country, and must learn the secrets of the land before we can find our way rightly."

"Oh, secrets enough here!" cried Zara. "Every one has his secret but myself. I have none, thank God! My good father is full of them; Edith, you see, has hers; my uncle is loaded with one even now, and eager to disburden himself; but my aunt's are the most curious of all, for they are everlasting; and not only that, but though most profound, they are sure to be known in five minutes to the whole world. Try to conceal them how she may, they are sure to drop out before the day is over; and, whatever good schemes she may have against any one, no defence is needed, for they are sure to frustrate themselves.—What are you laughing at, Sir Edward? Has she begun upon you already?"

"Nay, not exactly upon me," answered Sir Edward Digby. "She certainly did let drop some words which showed me, she had some scheme in her head, though whom it referred to, I am at a loss to divine."

"Nay, nay, now you are not frank," cried

the young lady. "Tell me this moment, if you would have me hold you good knight and true! Was it me or Edith that it was all about? Nay, do not shake your head, my good friend, for I will know, depend upon it; and if you do not tell me, I will ask my aunt myself——"

"Nay, for Heaven's sake, do not!" exclaimed Sir Edward. "You must not make your aunt think that I am a tell-tale."

"Oh, I know—I know!" exclaimed the fair girl, clapping her hands eagerly—"I can divine it all in a minute. She has been telling you what an excellent good girl Zara Croyland is, and what an admirable wife she would make, especially for any man moving in the highest society, and hinting, moreover, that she is fond of military men, and, in short, that Sir Edward Digby could not do better. I know it all—I know it all, as well as if I had heard it! But now, my dear sir," she continued, in a graver tone, "put all such nonsense out of your head, if you would have us such good friends as I think we may be. Leave my dear aunt's schemes to unravel and defeat themselves, or only think

of them as a matter of amusement, and do not for a moment believe that Zara Croyland has either any share in them, or any design of captivating you or any other man whatsoever; for I tell you fairly, and at once, that I never intend — that nothing would induce me — no, not if my own dearest happiness depended upon it—to marry, and leave poor Edith to endure all that she may be called upon to undergo. I will talk to you more about her another time; for I think that you already know something beyond what you have said to-day; but we are too near the house now, and I will only add, that I have spoken frankly to Sir Edward Digby, because I believe, from all I have seen and all I have heard, that he is incapable of misunderstanding such conduct."

"You do me justice, Miss Croyland," replied the young officer, much gratified; "but you have spoken under a wrong impression in regard to your aunt. I did not interrupt you, for what you said was too pleasing, too interesting not to induce me to let you go on; but I can assure you that what I said was perfectly

true, and that though some words which your aunt dropped accidentally showed me that she had some scheme on foot, she said nothing to indicate what it was."

"Well, never mind it," answered the young lady. "We now understand each other, I trust; and, after this, I do not think you will easily mistake me, though, if what I suppose is true, I may have to do a great many extraordinary things with you, Sir Edward—seek your society when you may not be very willing to grant it, consult you, rely upon you, confide in you in a way that few women would do, except with a brother or an acknowledged lover, which I beg you to understand you are on no account to be; and I, on my part, will promise that I will not misunderstand you either, nor take anything that you may do, at my request, for one very dear to me," (and she gave a glance over her shoulder towards her sister, who was some way behind,) "as anything but a sign of your having a kind and generous heart. So now that's all settled."

"There is one thing, Miss Croyland," replied Digby, gravely, "that you will find very

difficult to do, though you say you will try it, namely, to seek my society when I am unwilling to give it."

"Nay, nay, I will have no such speeches," cried Zara Croyland, "or I have done with you! I never could put any trust in a man who said civil things to me."

"What, not if he sincerely thought them?" demanded her companion.

"Then I would rather he continued to think them without speaking them," answered the young lady. "If you did but know, Sir Edward, how sickened and disgusted a poor girl in the country soon gets with flattery that means nothing, from men who insult her understanding by thinking that she can be pleased with such trash, you would excuse me for being rude and uncivilized enough to wish never to hear a smooth word from any man whom I am inclined to respect."

"Very well," answered the young baronet, laughing, "to please you, I will be as brutal as possible, and if you like it, scold you as sharply

as your uncle, if you say or do anything that I disapprove of."

"Do, do!" cried Zara; "I love him and esteem him, though he does not understand me in the least; and I would rather a great deal have his conversation, sharp and snappish as it seems to be, than all the honey or milk and water of any of the smart young men in the neighbourhood. But here we are at the house; and only one word more as a warning, and one word as a question; first, do not let any of my good aunt's schemes embarrass you in anything you have to do or say. Walk straight through them as if they did not exist. Take your own course, without, in the least degree, attending to what she says for or against."

"And what is the question?" demanded Sir Edward, as they were now mounting the steps to the terrace.

"Simply this," replied the fair lady,—"are you not acquainted with more of Edith's history than the people here are aware of?"

"I am," answered Digby; "and to see more

of her, to speak with her for a few minutes in private, if possible, was the great object of my coming hither."

"Thanks, thanks!" said Zara, giving him a bright and grateful smile. "Be guided by me, and you shall have the opportunity. But I must speak with you first myself, that you may know all. I suppose you are an early riser?"

"Oh, yes!" replied Sir Edward; but he added no more; for at that moment they were overtaken by Edith and Mr. Croyland; and the whole party entered the house together.

CHAPTER IX.

THERE is a strange similarity—I had nearly called it an affinity—between the climate of any country and the general character of its population; and there is a still stronger and more commonly remarked resemblance between the changes of the weather and the usual course of human life. From the atmosphere around us, and from the alterations which affect it, poets and moralists both, have borrowed a large store of figures; and the words, clouds, and sunshine, light breezes, and terrible storms, are terms as often used to express the variations in man's condition as to convey the ideas to which they were originally applied. But it is the affinity

between the climate and the people of which I wish to speak. The sunny lightness of the air of France, the burning heat of Italy and Spain, the cold dullness of the skies of Holland, contrast as strongly with the climate in which we live, as the characters of the several nations amongst themselves; and the fiercer tempests of the south, the more foggy and heavy atmosphere of the north, may well be taken as some compensation for the continual mutability of the weather in our own most changeable air. The differences are not so great here as in other lands. We escape, in general, the tornado and the hurricane, we know little of the burning heat of summer, or the intense cold of winter, as they are experienced in other parts of the world; but at all events, the changes are much more frequent; and we seldom have either a long lapse of sunny days, or a long continued season of frost, without interruption. So it is, too, with the people. Moveable and fluctuating as they always are, seeking novelty, disgusted even with all that is good as soon as they discover that it is old, our laws, our institutions, our very manners are continually undergoing

some change, though rarely, very rarely indeed, is it brought about violently and without due preparation. Sometimes it will occur, indeed, both morally and physically, that a great and sudden alteration takes place, and a rash and vehement proceeding will disturb the whole country, and seem to shake the very foundations of society. In the atmosphere, too, clouds and storms will gather in a few hours, and darken the whole heaven.

The latter was the case during the first night of Sir Edward Digby's stay at Harbourne House. The evening preceding, as well as the day, had been warm and sunshiny; but about nine o'clock the wind suddenly chopped round to the southward, and when Sir Edward woke on the following morning, as he usually did, about six, he found a strong breeze blowing and rattling the casements of the room, and the whole atmosphere loaded with a heavy sea-mist filled with saline particles, borne over Romney Marsh to the higher country, in which the house was placed.

"A pleasant day for partridge-shooting," he thought, as he rose from his bed; "what variations there are in this climate." But neverthe-

less, he opened the window and looked out, when, somewhat to his surprise, he saw fifteen or sixteen horses moving along the road, heavily laden, with a number of men on horseback following, and eight or ten on foot driving the weary beasts along. They were going leisurely enough; there was no affectation of haste or concealment; but yet all that the young officer had heard of the county and of the habits of its denizens, led him naturally to suppose that he had a gang of smugglers before him, escorting from the coast some contraband goods lately landed.

He had soon a more unpleasant proof of the lawless state of that part of England; for as he continued to lean out of the window, saying to himself, "Well, it is no business of mine," he saw two or three of the men pause; and a moment after, a voice shouted—"Take that, old Croyland, for sending me to gaol last April."

The wind bore the sounds to his ear, and made the words distinct; and scarcely had they been spoken, when a flash broke through the misty air, followed by a loud report, and a ball

whizzed through the window, just above his head, breaking one of the panes of glass, and lodging in the cornice at the other side of the room.

"Very pleasant!" said Sir Edward Digby to himself; but he was a somewhat rash young man, and he did not move an inch, thinking—"the 'vagabonds shall not have to say they frightened me."

They shewed no inclination to repeat the shot, however, riding on at a somewhat accelerated pace; and as soon as they were out of sight, Digby withdrew from the window, and began to dress himself. He had not given his servant, the night before, any orders to call him at a particular hour; but he knew that the man would not be later than half-past six; and before he appeared, the young officer was nearly dressed.

"Here, Somers," said his master, "put my gun together, and have everything ready if I should like to go out to shoot. After that I've a commission for you, something quite in your own way, which I know you will execute capitally."

"Quite ready, sir," said the man, putting up his hand to his head. "Always ready to obey orders."

"We want intelligence of the enemy, Somers," continued his master. "Get me every information you can obtain regarding young Mr. Radford, where he goes, what he does, and all about him."

"Past, present, or to come, sir?" demanded the man.

"All three," answered his master. "Everything you can learn about him, in short—birth, parentage, and education."

"I shall soon have to add his last dying speech and confession, I think, sir," said the man; "but you shall have it all before night—from the loose gossip of the post-office down to the full, true, and particular account of his father's own butler. But bless my soul, there's a hole through the window, sir."

"Nothing but a musket-ball, Somers," answered his master, carelessly. "You've seen such a thing before, I fancy."

"Yes, sir, but not often in a gentleman's bed-

room," replied the man. "Who could send it in here, I wonder?"

"Some smugglers, I suppose they were," replied Sir Edward, "who took me for Sir Robert Croyland, as I was leaning out of the window, and gave me a ball as they passed. I never saw a worse shot in my life; for I was put up like a target, and it went a foot and a half above my head. Give me those boots, Somers;" and having drawn them on, Sir Edward Digby descended to the drawing-room, while his servant commented upon his coolness, by saying, "Well, he's a devilish fine young fellow, that master of mine, and ought to make a capital general some of these days!"

In the drawing-room, Sir Edward Digby found nobody but a pretty country girl in a mob-cap sweeping out the dust; and leaving her to perform her functions undisturbed by his presence, he sauntered through a door which he had seen open the night before, exposing part of the interior of a library. That room was quite vacant, and as the young officer concluded that between it and the drawing-

room must lie the scene of his morning's operations, he entertained himself with taking down different books, looking into them for a moment or two, reading a page here and a page there, and then putting them up again. He was in no mood, to say the truth, either for serious study or light reading. Gay would not have amused him; Locke would have driven him mad.

He knew not well why it was, but his heart beat when he heard a step in the neighbouring room. It was nothing but the housemaid, as he was soon convinced, by her letting the dust-pan drop and making a terrible clatter. He asked himself what his heart could be about, to go on in such a way, simply because he was waiting, in the not very vague expectation of seeing a young lady, with whom he had to talk of some business, in which neither of them were personally concerned.

"It must be the uncertainty of whether she will come or not," he thought; "or else the secrecy of the thing;" and yet he had, often before, had to wait with still more secrecy and still more uncertainty, on very dangerous and important occasions, without feeling any such

agitation of his usually calm nerves. She was a very pretty girl, it was true, with all the fresh graces of youth about her, light and sunshine in her eyes, health and happiness on her cheeks and lips, and

"La grace encore plus belle que la beauté"

in every movement. But then, they perfectly understood each other; there was no harm, there was no risk, there was no reason why they should not meet.

Did they perfectly understand each other? Did they perfectly understand themselves? It is a very difficult question to answer; but one thing is very certain—that, of all things upon this earth, the most gullible is the human heart; and when it thinks it understands itself best, it is almost always sure to prove a greater fool than ever.

Sir Edward Digby did not altogether like his own thoughts; and therefore, after waiting for a quarter of an hour, he walked out into one of the little passages, which we have already mentioned, running from the central corridor towards a door or window in the front, between

the library and what was called the music-room. He had not been there a minute when a step—very different from that of the housemaid—was heard in the neighbouring room; and, as the officer was turning thither, he met the younger Miss Croyland coming out, with a bonnet—or hat, as it was then called,—hanging on her arm by the ribbons.

She held out her hand, frankly, towards him, saying, in a low tone, "You must think this all very strange, Sir Edward, and perhaps very improper. I have been taxing myself about it all night; but yet I was resolved I would not lose the opportunity, trusting to your generosity to justify me, when you hear all."

"It requires no generosity, my dear Miss Croyland," replied the young baronet; "I am already aware of so much, and see the kind and deep interest you take in your sister so clearly, that I fully understand and appreciate your motives."

"Thank you — thank you," replied Zara, warmly; "that sets my mind at rest. But

come out upon the terrace. There, seen by all the world, I shall not feel as if I were plotting;" and she unlocked the glass door at the end of the passage. Sir Edward Digby followed close upon her steps; and when once fairly on the esplanade before the house, and far enough from open doors and windows not to be overheard, they commenced their walk backwards and forwards.

It was quite natural that both should be silent for a few moments; for where there is much to say, and little time to say it in, people are apt to waste the precious present—or, at least, a part—in considering how it may best be said. At length the lady raised her eyes to her companion's face, with a smile more melancholy and embarrassed than usually found place upon her sweet lips, asking, "How shall I begin, Sir Edward?—Have you nothing to tell me?"

"I have merely to ask questions," replied Digby; "yet, perhaps that may be the best commencement. I am aware, my dear Miss Croyland, that your sister has loved, and has been as deeply beloved as woman ever was by

man. I know the whole tale; but what I seek now to learn is this—does she or does she not retain the affection of her early youth? Do former days and former feelings dwell in her heart as still existing things? or are they but as sad memories of a passion passed away, darkening instead of lighting the present,—or perhaps as a tie which she would fain shake off, and which keeps her from a brighter fate hereafter?"

He spoke solemnly, earnestly, with his whole manner changed; and Zara gazed in his face eagerly and inquiringly as he went on, her face glowing, but her look becoming less sad, till it beamed with a warm and relieved smile at the close. "I was right, and she was wrong"—she said, at length, as if speaking to herself. "But to answer your question, Sir Edward Digby," she continued, gravely. "You little know woman's heart, or you would not put it—I mean the heart of a true and unspoiled woman, a woman worthy of the name. When she loves, she loves for ever—and it is only when death or unworthiness takes from her him she loves, that love becomes a memory. You cannot yet judge

of Edith, and therefore I forgive you for asking such a thing; but she is all that is noble, and good, and bright; and Heaven pardon me, if I almost doubt that she was meant for happiness below—she seems so fitted for a higher state!"

The tears rose in her eyes as she spoke; but Sir Edward feared interruption, and went on, asking, somewhat abruptly perhaps, "What made you say, just now, that you were right and she was wrong?"

"Because she thought that he was dead, and that you came to announce it to her," Zara replied. "You spoke of him in the past, you always said, 'he was;' you said not a word of the present."

"Because I knew not what were her present feelings," answered Digby. "She has never written—she has never answered one letter. All his have been returned in cold silence to his agents, addressed in her own hand. And then her father wrote to——"

"Stay, stay!" cried Zara, putting her hand to her head—"addressed in her own hand? It must have been a forgery! Yet, no—perhaps

not. She wrote to him twice; once just after he went, and once in answer to a message. The last letter I gave to the gardener myself, and bade him post it. That, too, was addressed to his agent's house. Can they have stopped the letters and used the covers?"

"It is probable," answered Digby, thoughtfully. "Did she receive none from him?"

"None—none," replied Zara, decidedly. "All that she has ever heard of him was conveyed in that one message; but she doubted not, Sir Edward. She knew him, it seems, better than he knew her."

"Neither did he doubt her," rejoined her companion, "till circumstance after circumstance occurred to shake his confidence. Her own father wrote to him—now three years ago—to say that she was engaged, by her own consent, to this young Radford, and to beg that he would trouble her peace no more by fruitless letters."

"Oh, Heaven!" cried Zara, "did my father say that?"

"He did," replied Sir Edward. "And more:

everything that poor Layton has heard since his return has confirmed the tale. He inquired, too curiously for his own peace—first, whether she was yet married; next, whether she was really engaged; and every one gave but one account."

"How busy they have been!" said Zara, thoughtfully. "Whoever said it, it is false, Sir Edward; and he should not have doubted her more than she doubted him."

"She, you admit, had one message," answered Digby; "he had none; and yet he held a lingering hope—trust would not altogether be crushed out. Can you tell me the tenour of the letters which she sent?"

"Nay, I did not read them," replied his fair companion; "but she told me that it was the same story still: that she could not violate her duty to her parent; but that she should ever consider herself pledged and plighted to him beyond recall, by what had passed between them."

"Then there is light at last," said Digby, with a smile. "But what is this story of young

Radford? Is he, or is he not, her lover? He seemed to pay her little attention,—more, indeed, to yourself."

The gay girl laughed. "I will tell you all about it," she answered. "Richard Radford is not her lover. He cares as little about her as about the Queen of England, or any body he has never seen; and, as you say, he would perhaps pay me the compliment of selecting me rather than Edith, if there was not a very cogent objection: Edith has forty thousand pounds settled upon herself by my mother's brother, who was her godfather; I have nothing, or next to nothing—some three or four thousand pounds, I believe; but I really don't know. However, this fortune of my poor sister's is old Radford's object; and he and my father have settled it between them, that the son of the one should marry the daughter of the other. What possesses my father, I cannot divine; for he must condemn old Radford, and despise the young one; but certain it is that he has pressed Edith, nearly to cruelty, to give her hand to a man she scorns and hates—and presses her

still. It would be worse than it is, I fear, were it not for young Radford himself, who is not half so eager as his father, and does not wish to hurry matters on.—I may have some small share in the business," she continued, laughing again, but colouring at the same time; "for, to tell the truth, Sir Edward, having nothing else to do, and wishing to relieve poor Edith as much as possible, I have perhaps foolishly, perhaps even wrongly, drawn this wretched young man away from her whenever I had an opportunity. I do not think it was coquetry, as my uncle calls it—nay, I am sure it was not; for I abhor him as much as any one; but I thought that as there was no chance of my ever being driven to marry him, I could bear the infliction of his conversation better than my poor sister."

"The motive was a kind one, at all events," replied Sir Edward Digby; "but then I may firmly believe that there is no chance whatever of Miss Croyland giving her hand to Richard Radford?"

"None—none whatever," answered his fair companion. But at that point of their con-

versation one of the windows above was thrown up, and the voice of Mrs. Barbara was heard exclaiming—" Zara, my love, put on your hat; you will catch cold if you walk in that way, with your hat on your arm, in such a cold, misty morning!"

Miss Croyland looked up, nodding to her aunt; and doing as she was told, like a very good girl as she was. But the next instant she said, in a low tone, " Good Heaven! there is his face at the window! My unlucky aunt has roused him by calling to me; and we shall not be long without him."

" Who do you mean?" asked the young officer, turning his eyes towards the house, and seeing no one.

" Young Radford," answered Zara. " Did you not know that they had to carry him to bed last night, unable to stand? So my maid told me; and I saw his face just now at the window, next to my aunt's. We shall have little time, Sir Edward, for he is as intrusive as he is disagreeable; so tell me at once what I am to think regarding poor Harry Layton. Does he still love

Edith? Is he in a situation to enable him to seek her, without affording great, and what they would consider reasonable, causes of objection?"

"He loves her as deeply and devotedly as ever," replied Sir Edward Digby; "and all I have to tell him will but, if possible, increase that love. Then as to his situation, he is now a superior officer in the army, highly distinguished, commanding one of our best regiments, and sharing largely in the late great distribution of prize-money. There is no position that can be filled by a military man to which he has not a right to aspire; and, moreover, he has already received, from the gratitude of his king and his country, the high honour——"

But he was not allowed to finish his sentence; for Mrs. Barbara Croyland, who was most unfortunately matutinal in her habits, now came out with a shawl for her fair niece, and was uncomfortably civil to Sir Edward Digby, inquiring how he had slept, whether he had been warm enough, whether he liked two pillows or one, and a great many other questions, which

lasted till young Radford made his appearance at the door, and then, with a pale face and sullen brow, came out and joined the party on the terrace.

"Well," said Mrs. Barbara—now that she had done as much mischief as possible—"I'll just go in and make breakfast, as Edith must set out early, and Mr. Radford wants to get home to shoot."

"Edith set off early?" exclaimed Zara; "why, where is she going, my dear aunt?"

"Oh, I have just been settling it all with your papa, my love," replied Mrs. Barbara. "I thought she was looking ill yesterday, and so I talked to your uncle last night. He said he would be very glad to have her with him for a few days; but as he expects a Captain Osborn before the end of the week, she must come at once; and Sir Robert says she can have the carriage after breakfast, but that it must be back by one."

Zara cast down her eyes, and the whole party, as if by common consent, took their way back to the house. As they passed in, however, and proceeded towards the dining-room, where the

table was laid for breakfast, Zara found a moment to say to Sir Edward Digby, in a low tone, "Was ever anything so unfortunate! I will try to stop it if I can."

"Not so unfortunate as it seems," answered the young baronet, in a whisper; "let it take its course. I will explain hereafter."

"Whispering! whispering!" said young Radford, in a rude tone, and with a sneer curling his lip.

Zara's cheek grew crimson; but Digby turned upon him sharply, demanding, "What is that to you, sir? Pray make no observations upon my conduct, for depend upon it I shall not tolerate any insolence."

At that moment, however, Sir Robert Croyland appeared; and whatever might have been Richard Radford's intended reply, it was suspended upon his lips.

CHAPTER X.

Before I proceed farther with the events of that morning, I must return for a time to the evening which preceded it. It was a dark and somewhat dreary night, when Mr. Radford, leaving his son stupidly drunk at Sir Robert Croyland's, proceeded to the hall door to mount his horse; and as he pulled his large riding-boots over his shoes and stockings, and looked out, he regretted that he had not ordered his carriage. "Who would have thought," he said, "that such a fine day would have ended in such a dull evening?"

"It often happens, my dear Radford," replied Sir Robert Croyland, who stood beside him, "that everything looks fair and prosperous for a time; then suddenly the wind shifts, and a gloomy night succeeds."

Mr. Radford was not well-pleased with the homily. It touched upon that which was a sore subject with him at that moment; for, to say the truth, he was labouring under no light apprehensions regarding the result of certain speculations of his. He had lately lost a large sum in one of these wild adventures—far more than was agreeable to a man of his money-getting turn of mind; and though he was sanguine enough, from long success, to embark, like à determined gambler, a still larger amount in the same course, yet the first shadow of reverse which had fallen upon him, brought home and applied to his own situation the very commonplace words of Sir Robert Croyland; and he began to fancy that the bright day of his prosperity might be indeed over, and a dark and gloomy night about to succeed.

As we have said, therefore, he did not at all like the baronet's homily; and, as very often happens with men of his disposition, he felt displeased with the person whose words alarmed him. Murmuring something, therefore, about its being "a devilish ordinary circumstance indeed," he strode to the door, scarcely wishing

the baronet good night, and mounted a powerful horse, which was held ready for him. He then rode forward, followed by two servants on horseback, proceeding slowly at first, but getting into a quicker pace when he came upon the parish road, and trotting on hard along the edge of Harbourne Wood. He had drunk as much wine as his son; but his hard and well-seasoned head was quite insensible to the effects of strong beverages, and he went on revolving all probable contingencies, somewhat sullen and out of humour with all that had passed during the afternoon, and taking a very unpromising view of everybody and everything.

"I've a notion," he thought, "that old scoundrel Croyland is playing fast and loose about his daughter's marriage with my son. He shall repent it if he do; and if Dick does not make the girl pay for all her airs and coldness when he's got her, he's no son of mine. He seems as great a fool as she is, though, and makes love to her sister without a penny, never saying a word to a girl who has forty thousand pounds. The thing shall soon be settled

one way or another, however. I'll have a conference with Sir Robert on Friday, and bring him to book. I'll not be trifled with any longer. Here we have been kept more than four years waiting till the girl chooses to make up her mind, and I'll not stop any longer. It shall be, yes or no, at once."

He was still busy with such thoughts when he reached the angle of Harbourne Wood, and a loud voice exclaimed, "Hi! Mr. Radford!"

"Who the devil are you?" exclaimed that worthy gentleman, pulling in his horse, and at the same time putting his hand upon one of the holsters, which every one at that time carried at his saddle bow.

"Harding, sir," answered the voice—"Jack Harding; and I want to speak a word with you."

At the same time the man walked forward; and Mr. Radford immediately dismounting, gave his horse to the servants, and told them to lead him quietly on till they came to Tiffenden. Then pausing till the sound of the hoofs became somewhat faint, he asked, with a certain degree of alarm, "Well, Harding, what's

the matter? What has brought you up in such a hurry to-night?"

"No great hurry, sir," answered the smuggler, "I came up about four o'clock; and finding that you were dining at Sir Robert's, I thought I would look out for you as you went home, having something to tell you. I got an inkling last night, that, some how or another, the people down at Hythe have some suspicion that you are going to try something, and I doubt that boy very much."

"Indeed! indeed!" exclaimed Mr. Radford, evidently under great apprehension. "What have they found out, Harding?"

"Why, not much, I believe," replied the smuggler; "but merely that there's something in the wind, and that you have a hand in it."

"That's bad enough—that's bad enough," repeated Mr. Radford. "We must put it off, Harding. We must delay it, till this has blown by."

"No, I think not, sir," answered the smuggler. "It seems to me, on the contrary, that we ought to hurry it; and I'll tell you why.

You see, the wind changed about five, and if I'm not very much mistaken, we shall have a cloudy sky and dirty weather for the next week at least. That's one thing; but then another is this, the Ramleys are going to make a run this very night. Now, I know that the whole affair is blown; and though they may get the goods ashore they wont carry them far. I told them so, just to be friendly; but they wouldn't listen, and you know their rash way. Bill Ramley answered, they would run the goods in broad daylight, if they liked, that there was not an officer in all Kent who would dare to stop them. Now, I know that they will be caught to-morrow morning, somewhere up about your place. I rather think, too, your son has a hand in the venture; and if I were you, I would do nothing to make people believe that it wasn't my own affair altogether. Let them think what they please; and then they are not so likely to be on the look-out."

"I see—I see," cried Mr. Radford. "If they catch these fellows, and think that this is

my venture, they will never suspect another. It's a good scheme. We had better set about it to-morrow night."

"I don't know," answered Harding. "That cannot well be done, I should think. First, you must get orders over to the vessel to stand out to sea; then you must get all your people together, and one half of them are busy upon this other scheme, the Ramleys and young Chittenden, and him they call the major, and all their parties. You must see what comes of that first; for one half of them may be locked up before to-morrow night.

"That's unfortunate, indeed!" said Mr. Radford, thoughtfully.

"One must take a little ill luck with plenty of good luck," observed Harding; "and it's fortunate enough for you that these wild fellows will carry through this mad scheme, when they know they are found out before they start. Besides, I'm not sure that it is not best to wait till the night after, or, may be, the night after that. Then the news will have spread, that the goods have been either run and hid away, or seized

by the officers. In either case, if you manage well, they will think that it is your venture; and the fellows on the coast will be off their guard—especially Mowle, who's the sharpest of them all."

"Oh, I'll go down to-morrow and talk to Mowle myself," replied Mr. Radford. "It will be well worth my while to give him a hundred guineas to wink a bit."

"Don't try it—don't try it!" exclaimed Harding, quickly. "It will do no good, and a great deal of harm. In the first place, you can do nothing with Mowle. He never took a penny in his life."

"Oh, every man has his price," rejoined Mr. Radford, whose opinion of human nature, as the reader may have perceived, was not particularly high. "It's only because he wants to be bid up to. Mr. Mowle thinks himself above five or ten pounds; but the chink of a hundred guineas is a very pleasant sound."

"He's as honest a fellow as ever lived," answered Harding, "and I tell you plainly, Mr. Radford, that if you offered him ten times the

sum, he wouldn't take it. You would only shew him that this venture is not your grand one, without doing yourself the least good. He's a fair, open enemy, and lets every one know that, as long as he's a riding-officer here, he will do all he can against us."

"Then he must be knocked on the head," said Mr. Radford, in a calm and deliberate tone; "and it shall be done, too, if he meddles with my affairs."

"It will not be I who do it," replied Harding; "unless we come hand to hand together. Then, every man must take care of himself; but I should be very sorry, notwithstanding; for he's a straightforward, bold fellow, as brave as a lion, and with a good heart into the bargain. I wonder such an honest man ever went into such a rascally service."

The last observation of our friend Harding may perhaps sound strangely to the reader's ears; but some allowance must be made for professional prejudices, and it is by no means too much to say that the smugglers of those days, and even of a much later period,

looked upon their own calling as highly honest, honourable, and respectable, regarding the Customs as a most fraudulent and abominable institution, and all connected with it more or less in the light of a band of swindlers and knaves, leagued together for the purpose of preventing honest men from pursuing their avocations in peace. Such were the feelings which induced Harding to wonder that so good a man as Mowle could have anything to do with the prevention of smuggling; for he was so thoroughly convinced he was in the right himself, that he could not conceive how any one could see the case in any other point of view.

"Ay," answered Mr. Radford, "that is a wonder, if he is such a good sort of man; but that I doubt. However, as you say it would not do to put oneself in his power, I'll have him looked after, and in the meanwhile, let us talk of the rest of the business. You say the night after to-morrow, or the night after that! I must know, however; for the men must be down. How are we to arrange that?"

"Why, I'll see what the weather is like," was

Harding's reply. "Then I can easily send up to let you know—or, what will be better still, if you can gather the men together the day after to-morrow, in the different villages not far off the coast, and I should find it the right sort of night, and get out to sea, they shall see a light on the top of Tolsford Hill, as soon as I am near in shore again. That will serve to guide them and puzzle the officers. Then let them gather, and come down towards Dimchurch, where they will find somebody from me to guide them."

"They shall gather first at Saltwood," said Mr. Radford, "and then march down to Dimchurch. But how are we to manage about the ship?"

"Why, you must send an order," answered Harding, "for both days, and let your skipper know that if he does not see us the first, he will see us the second."

"You had better take it down with you at once," replied Mr. Radford, "and get it off early to-morrow. If you'll just come up to my house, I'll write it for you in a minute."

"Ay, but I'm not going home to-night," said the smuggler; "I can have a bed at Mrs. Clare's; and I'm going to sleep there, so you can send it over when you like in the morning, and I'll get it off in time."

"I wish you would not go hanging about after that girl, when we've got such serious business in hand," exclaimed Mr. Radford, in a sharp tone; but the next moment he added, with a sudden change of voice, "It doesn't signify to-night, however. There will be time enough; and they say you are going to marry her, Harding. Is that true?"

"I should say, that's my business," replied Harding, bluntly, "but that I look upon it as an honour, Mr. Radford, that she's going to marry me; for a better girl does not live in the land, and I've known her a long while now, so I'm never likely to think otherwise."

"Ay, I've known her a long time, too," answered Mr. Radford—"ever since her poor father was shot, and before; and a very good girl I believe she is. But now that you are over here, you may as well wait and hear what comes

of these goods. Couldn't you just ride over to the Ramleys to-morrow morning—there you'll hear all about it."

Harding laughed, but replied the next moment, in a grave tone, "I don't like the Ramleys, sir, and don't want to have more to do with them than I can help. I shall hear all about it soon enough, without going there."

"But I sha'n't," answered Mr. Radford.

"Then you had better send your son, sir," rejoined Harding. "He's oftener there than I am, a great deal.—Well, the matter is all settled, then. Either the night after to-morrow, or the night after that, if the men keep a good look-out, they'll see a light on Tolsford Hill. Then they must gather as fast as possible at Saltwood, and come on with anybody they may find there. Good night, Mr. Radford."

"Good night, Harding—good night," said Mr. Radford, walking on; and the other turning his steps back towards Harbourne, made his way, by the first road on the right, to the cottage where we have seen him in the earlier part of the day.

It was a pleasant aspect that the cottage presented when he went in, which he did without any of the ceremonies of knocking at the door or ringing the bell; for he was sure of a welcome. There was but one candle lighted on the table, for the dwellers in the place were poor; but the room was small, and that one was quite sufficient to shew the white walls and the neat shelves covered with crockery, and with one or two small prints in black frames. Besides, there was the fire-place, with a bright and cheerful, but not large fire; for though, in the month of September, English nights are frequently cold and sometimes frosty, the weather had been as yet tolerably mild. Nevertheless, the log of fir at the top blazed high, and crackled amidst the white and red embers below, and the flickering flame, as it rose and fell, caused the shadows to fall more vaguely or distinctly upon the walls, with a fanciful uncertainty of outline, that had something cheerful, yet mysterious in it.

The widow was bending over the fire, with her face turned away, and her figure in the shadow. The daughter was busily working with her needle,

but her eyes were soon raised—and they were very beautiful eyes — as Harding entered. A smile, too, was upon her lips; and though even tears may be lovely, and a sad look awaken deep and tender emotions, yet the smile of affection on a face we love is the brightest aspect of that bright thing the human countenance. It is what the sunshine is to the landscape, which may be fair in the rain or sublime in the storm, but can never harmonize so fully with the innate longing for happiness which is in the breast of every one, as when lighted up with the rays that call all its excellence and all its powers into life and being.

Harding sat down beside the girl, and took her hand in his, saying, "Well, Kate, this day-three weeks, then, remember?"

"My mother says so," answered the girl, with a cheek somewhat glowing, "and then, you know, John, you are to give it up altogether. No more danger—no more secrets?"

"Oh, as for danger," answered Harding, laughing, "I did not say that, love. I don't know what life would be worth without danger.

Every man is in danger all day long; and I suppose that we are only given life just to feel the pleasure of it by the chance of losing it. But no dangers but the common ones, Kate. I'll give up the trade, as you have made me promise; and I shall have enough by that time to buy out the whole vessel, in which I've got shares, and what between that and the boats, we shall do very well. You put me in mind, with your fears, of a song that wicked boy, little Starlight, used to sing. I learned it from hearing him: a more mischievous little dog does not live; but he has got a sweet pipe."

"Sing it, John—sing it!" cried Kate; "I love to hear you sing, for it seems as if you sing what you are thinking."

"No, I wont sing it," answered Harding, "for it is a sad sort of song, and that wont do when I am so happy."

"Oh, I like sad songs!" said the girl; "they please me far more than all the merry ones."

"Oh, pray sing it, Harding!" urged the widow; "I am very fond of a song that makes me cry."

"This wont do that," replied the smuggler; "but it is sadder than some that do, I always think. However, I'll sing it, if you like;" and in a fine, mellow, bass voice, to a very simple air, with a flattened third coming in every now and then, like the note of a wintry bird, he went on:—

SONG.

"Life's like a boat,
Rowing—rowing
Over a bright sea,
On the waves to float,
Flowing—flowing
Away from her lea.

"Up goes the sheet!
Sailing—sailing,
To catch the rising breeze,
While the winds fleet,
Wailing—wailing,
Sigh o'er the seas.

"She darts through the waves,
Gaily—gaily,
Scattering the foam.
Beneath her, open graves,
Daily—daily,
The blithest to entomb.

"Who heeds the deep,
Yawning—yawning
For its destined prey,
When from night's dark sleep,
Dawning—dawning,
Wakens the bright day?

"Away, o'er the tide!
Fearless—fearless
Of all that lies beneath;
Let the waves still hide,
Cheerless—cheerless,
All their stores of death.

"Stray where we may,
Roaming—roaming
Either far or near,
Death is on the way,
Coming—coming—
Who's the fool to fear?"

The widow did weep, however, not at the rude song, though the voice that sung it was fine, and perfect in the melody, but at the remembrances which it awakened — remembrances on which she loved to dwell, although they were so sad.

"Ay, Harding," she said, "it's very true what your song says. Whatever way one goes,

death is near enough; and I don't know that it's a bit nearer on the sea than anywhere else."

"Not a whit," replied Harding; "God's hand is upon the sea as well as upon the land, Mrs. Clare; and if it is his will that we go, why we go; and if it is his will that we stay, he doesn't want strength to protect us."

"No, indeed," answered Mrs. Clare; "and it's that which comforts me, for I think that what is God's will must be good. I'm sure, when my poor husband went out in the morning, six years ago come the tenth of October next, as well and as hearty as a man could be, I never thought to see him brought home a corpse, and I left a lone widow with my poor girl, and not knowing where to look for any help. But God raised me up friends where I least expected them."

"Why you had every right to expect that Sir Robert would be kind to you, Mrs. Clare," rejoined Harding, "when your husband had been in his service for sixteen or seventeen years."

"No, indeed, I hadn't," said the widow; "for Sir Robert was always, we thought, a rough,

hard master, grumbling continually, till my poor man could hardly bear it; for he was a free-spoken man, as I dare say you remember, Mr. Harding, and would say his mind to any one, gentle or simple."

"He was as good a soul as ever lived," answered Harding; "a little rash and passionate, but none the worse for that."

"Ay, but it was that which set the head keeper against him," answered the widow, "and he set Sir Robert, making out that Edward was always careless and insolent; but he did his duty as well as any man, and knowing that, he didn't like to be found fault with. However, I don't blame Sir Robert; for since my poor man's death he has found out what he was worth; and very kind he has been to me, to be sure. The cottage, and the garden, and the good bit of ground at the back, and twelve shillings a-week into the bargain, have we had from him ever since."

"Ay, and I am sure nothing can be kinder than the two young ladies," said Kate; "they are always giving me something; and Miss

Edith taught me all I know. I should have been sadly ignorant if it had not been for her —and a deal of trouble I gave her."

"God bless her!" cried Harding, heartily. "She's a nice young lady, I believe, though I never saw her but twice, and then she looked very sad."

"Ay, she has cause enough, poor thing!" said Mrs. Clare. "Though I remember her as blithe as the morning lark—a great deal gayer than Miss Zara, gay as she may be."

"Ay, I know—they crossed her love," answered Harding; "and that's enough to make one sad. Though I never heard the rights of the story."

"Oh, it was bad enough to break her heart, poor thing!" replied Mrs. Clare. "You remember young Layton, the rector's son—a fine, handsome, bold lad as ever lived, and as good as he was handsome. Well, he was quite brought up with these young ladies, you know —always up at the Hall, and Miss Edith always down at the Rectory; and one would have thought Sir Robert blind or foolish, not to

fancy that two such young things would fall in love with each other; and so they did, to be sure. Many's the time I've seen them down here, in this very cottage, laughing and talking, and as fond as a pair of doves—for Sir Robert used to let them do just whatever they liked, and many a time used to send young Harry Layton to take care of Miss Croyland, when she was going out to walk any distance; so, very naturally, they promised themselves to each other; and one day — when he was twenty and she just sixteen—they got a Prayer-Book at the Rectory, and read over the marriage ceremony together, and took all the vows down upon their bended knees. I remember it quite well, for I was down at the Rectory that very day helping the housekeeper; and just as they had done old Mr. Layton came in, and found them somewhat confused, and the book open between them. He would know what it was all about, and they told him the truth. So then he was in a terrible taking; and he got Miss Croyland under his arm and went away up to Sir Robert directly, and told him the whole

story without a minute's delay. Every one thought it would end in being a match; for though Sir Robert was very angry, and insisted that Harry Layton should be sent to his regiment immediately—for he was then just home for a bit, on leave—he did not show how angry he was at first, but very soon after he turned Mr. Layton out of the living, and made him pay, I don't know what, for dilapidations; so that he was arrested and put in prison—which broke his heart, poor man, and he died!"

Harding gave Sir Robert Croyland a hearty oath; and Mrs. Clare proceeded to tell her tale, saying—"I did not give much heed to the matter then; for it was just at that time that my husband was killed, and I could think of nothing else; but when I came to hear of what was going on, I found that Sir Robert had promised his daughter to this young Radford——"

"As nasty a vermin as ever lived," said Harding.

"Well, she wont have him, I'm sure," continued the widow, "for it has been hanging off and on for these six years. People at first said

it was because they were too young. But I know that she has always refused, and declared that nothing should ever drive her to marry him, or any one else; for the law might say what it liked, but her own heart and her own conscience, told her that she was Harry Layton's wife, and could not be any other man's, as long as he was living. Susan, her maid, heard her say so to Sir Robert himself; but he still keeps teasing her about it, and tells everybody she's engaged to young Radford."

"He'll go the devil," said Harding; "and I'll go to bed, Mrs. Clare, for I must be up early to-morrow, to get a good many things to rights. God bless you Kate, my love! I dare say I shall see you before I go—for I must measure the dear little finger!" And giving her a hearty kiss, Harding took a candle, and retired to the snug room that had been prepared for him.

CHAPTER XI.

We must change the scene for a while, not only to another part of the county of Kent, but to very different people from the worthy Widow Clare and the little party assembled at her cottage. We must pass over the events of the night also, and of the following morning up to the hour of nine, proposing shortly to return to Harbourne House, and trace the course of those assembled there. The dwelling into which we must now introduce the reader, was a large, old-fashioned Kentish farm-house, not many miles on the Sussex side of Ashford. It was built, as many of these farm-houses still are, in the form of a cross, presenting four

limbs of strongly constructed masonry, two stories high, with latticed windows divided into three partitions, separated by rather neatly cut divisions of stone. Externally it had a strong Harry-the-Eighth look about it, and probably had been erected in his day, or in that of one of his immediate successors, as the residence of some of the smaller gentry of the time.

At the period I speak of, it was tenanted by a family notorious for their daring and licentious life, and still renowned in county tradition for many a fierce and lawless act. Nevertheless, the head of the house, now waxing somewhat in years, carried on, not only ostensibly but really, the peaceable occupation of a Kentish farmer. He had his cows and his cattle, and his sheep and his pigs; he grew wheat and barley, and oats and turnips; had a small portion of hop-ground, and brewed his own beer. But this trade of farming was only a small part of his employment, though, to say the truth, he had given himself up more to it since his bodily powers had declined, and he was no longer able to bear the fatigue and exertion which

the great strength of his early years had looked upon as sport. The branch of his business which he was most fond of was now principally entrusted to his two sons; and two strong, handsome daughters, which made the number of his family amount to four, occasionally aided their brothers, dressed in men's clothes, and mounted upon powerful horses, which they managed as well as any grooms in the county.

The reader must not think that, in this description, we are exercising indiscreetly our licence for dealing in fiction. We are painting a true picture of the family of which we speak, as they lived and acted some eighty or eighty-five years ago.

The wife of the farmer had been dead ten or twelve years; and her children had done just what they liked ever since; but it must be admitted, that, even if she had lived to superintend their education, we have no reason to conclude their conduct would have been very different from what it was. We have merely said that they had done as they pleased ever since her death, because during her life

she had made them do as she pleased, and beat them, or, as she herself termed it, "basted" them heartily, if they did not. She was quite capable of doing so too, to her own perfect satisfaction, for probably few arms in all Kent were furnished with more sinewy muscles or a stouter fist than hers could boast. It was only upon minor points of difference, however, that she and her children ever quarrelled; for of their general course of conduct she approved most highly; and no one was more ready to receive packets of lace, tea, or other goods under her fostering care, or more apt and skilful in stopping a tub of spirits from "talking," or of puzzling a Custom-House officer when force was not at hand to resist him.

She was naturally of so strong a constitution, and so well built a frame, that it is wonderful she died at all; but having caught cold one night, poor thing!—it is supposed, in setting fire to a neighbouring farm-house, the inmates of which were suspected of having informed against her husband—her very strength and vigour gave a tendency to inflammation, which speedily

reduced her very low. A surgeon, who visited the house in fear and trembling, bled her largely, and forbade the use of all that class of liquids which she was accustomed to imbibe in considerable quantities; and for three or four days the fear of death made her follow his injunctions. But at the end of that period, when the crisis of the disease was imminent, finding herself no better, and very weak, she declared that the doctor was a fool, and ought to have his head broken, and directed the maid to bring her the big green bottle out of the corner cupboard. To this she applied more than once, and then beginning to get a little riotous, she sent for her family to witness how soon she had cured herself. Sitting up in her bed, with a yellow dressing-gown over her shoulders, and a gay cap overshadowing her burning face, she sung them a song in praise of good liquor—somewhat panting for breath, it must be owned—and then declaring that she was "devilish thirsty," which was probably accurate to the letter, she poured out a large glass from the big green bottle, which happened to be her bed-

fellow for the time, and raised it to her lips. Half the contents went down her throat; but, how it happened I do not know, the rest was spilt upon the bed clothes, and good Mrs. Ramley fell back in a doze, from which nobody could rouse her. Before two hours were over she slept a still sounder sleep, which required the undertaker to provide against its permanence.

The bereaved widower comforted himself after a time. We will not say how many hours it required to effect that process. He was not a drunken man himself; for the passive participle of the verb to "drink" was not often actually applicable to his condition. Nevertheless, there was a great consumption of hollands in the house during the next week; and, if it was a wet funeral that followed, it was not with water, salt or fresh.

There are compensations for all things; and if Ramley had lost his wife, and his children a mother, they all lost also a great number of very good beatings, for, sad to say, he who could thrash all the country round, submitted very often to be thrashed by his better half, or at

all events underwent the process of either having his head made closely acquainted with a candlestick, or rendered the means of breaking a platter. After that period the two boys grew up into as fine, tall, handsome, dissolute blackguards as one could wish to look upon; and for the two girls, no term perhaps can be found in the classical authors of our language; but the vernacular supplies an epithet particularly applicable, which we must venture to use. They were two *strapping wenches*, nearly as tall as their brothers, full, rounded, and well formed in person, fine and straight cut in features, with large black shining eyes, a well-turned foot and ancle, and, as was generally supposed, the invincible arm of their mother.

We are not here going to investigate or dwell upon the individual morality of the two young ladies. It is generally said to have been better in some respects than either their ordinary habits, their education, or their language would have led one to expect; and, perhaps being very full of the stronger passions, the softer ones had no great dominion over them.

There, however, they sat at breakfast on the morning of which we have spoken, in the kitchen of the farm-house, with their father seated at the head of the table. He was still a great, tall, raw-boned man, with a somewhat ogre-ish expression of countenance, and hair more white than grey. But there were four other men at the table besides himself, two being servants of the farm, and two acknowledged lovers of the young ladies—very bold fellows as may well be supposed; for to marry a she-lion or a demoiselle bear would have been a light undertaking compared to wedding one of the Miss Ramleys. They seemed to be upon very intimate terms with those fair personages, however, and perhaps possessed as much of their affection as could possibly be obtained; but still the love-making seemed rather of a feline character, for the caresses, which were pretty prodigal, were mingled with—we must not say interrupted by—a great deal of grumbling and growling, some scratching, and more than one pat upon the side of the head, which did not come with the gentleness of the western wind.

The fare upon the table consisted neither of tea, coffee, cocoa, nor any other kind of weak beverage, but of beef and strong beer, a diet very harmonious with the appearance of the persons who partook thereof. It was seasoned occasionally with roars of laughter, gay and not very delicate jests, various pieces of fun, which on more than one occasion went to the very verge of an angry encounter, together with a good many blasphemous oaths, and those testimonies of affection which I have before spoken of as liberally bestowed by the young ladies upon their lovers in the shape of cuffs and scratches. The principal topic of conversation seemed to be some adventure which was even then going forward, and in which the sons of the house were taking a part. No fear, no anxiety, however, was expressed by any one, though they wondered that Jim and Ned had not yet returned.

"If they don't come soon they won't get much beef, Tom, if you swallow it at that rate," said the youngest Miss Ramley to her sweetheart; "you've eaten two pounds already, I'm sure."

The young gentleman declared that it was all for love of her, but that he hadn't eaten half so much as she had, whereupon the damsel became wroth, and appealed to her father, who, for his part, vowed, that, between them both, they had eaten and swilled enough to fill the big hog-trough. The dispute might have run high, for Miss Ramley was not inclined to submit to such observations, even from her father; but, just as she was beginning in good set terms, which she had learnt from himself, to condemn her parent's eyes, the old man started up, exclaiming, "Hark! there's a shot out there!"

"To be sure," answered one of the lovers. "It's the first of September, and all the people are out shooting."

Even while he was speaking, however, several more shots were heard, apparently too many to proceed from sportsmen in search of game, and the next moment the sound of horses' feet could be heard running quick upon the road, and then turning into the yard which lay before the house.

"There they are!—there they are!" cried half-a-dozen voices; and, all rushing out at the front door, they found the two young men with several companions, and four led horses, heavily laden. Jim, the elder brother, with the assistance of one of those who accompanied him, was busily engaged in shutting the two great wooden gates which had been raised by old Ramley some time before—nobody could tell why—in place of a five-barred gate, which, with the tall stone wall, formerly shut out the yard from the road. The other brother, Edward, or Ned Ramley, as he was called, stood by the side of his horse, holding his head down over a puddle; and, for a moment, no one could make out what he was about. On his sister Jane approaching him, however, she perceived a drop of blood falling every second into the dirty water below, and exclaimed, "How hast thou broken thy noddle, Ned?"

"There, let me alone, Jinny," cried the young man, shaking off the hand she had laid upon his arm, "or I shall bloody my toggery. One of those fellows has nearly

cracked my skull, that's all; and he'd have done it, too, if he had but been a bit nearer. This brute shied just as I was firing my pistol at him, or he'd never have got within arm's length. It's nothing—it's but a scratch.—Get the goods away; for they'll be after us quick enough. They are chasing the major and his people, and that's the way we got off."

One of the usual stories of the day was then told by the rest — of how a cargo had been run the night before, and got safe up into the country: how, when they thought all danger over, they had passed before old Bob Croyland's windows, and how Jim had given him a shot as he stood at one of them; and then they went on to say that, whether it was the noise of the gun, or that the old man had sent out to call the officers upon them, they could not tell; but about three miles further on, they saw a largish party of horse upon their right. Flight had then become the order of the day; but, finding that they could not effect it in one body, they were just upon the point of separating, Ned Ramley declared, when two of the riding

officers overtook them, supported by a number of dragoons. Some firing took place, without much damage, and, dividing into three bodies, the smugglers scampered off, the Ramleys and their friends taking their way towards their own house, and the others in different directions. The former might have escaped unpursued, it would seem, had not the younger brother, Ned, determined to give one of the dragoons a shot before he went: thus bringing on the encounter in which he had received the wound on his head.

While all this was being told to the father, the two girls, their lovers, the farm-servants, and several of the men, hurried the smuggled goods into the house, and raising a trap in the floor of the kitchen—contrived in such a manner that four whole boards moved up at once on the western side of the room—stowed the different articles away in places of concealment below, so well arranged, that even if the trap was discovered, the officers would find nothing but a vacant space, unless they examined the walls very closely.

The horses were then all led to the stable; and Edward Ramley, having in some degree stopped the bleeding of his wound, moved into the house, with most of the other men. Old Ramley and the two farm-servants, however, remained without, occupying themselves in loading a cart with manure, till the sound of horses galloping down was heard, and somebody shook the gates violently, calling loudly to those within to open "in the King's name."

The farmer instantly mounted upon the cart, and looked over the wall; but the party before the gates consisted only of five or six dragoons, of whom he demanded, in a bold tone, "Who the devil be you, that I should open for you? Go away, go away, and leave a quiet man at peace!"

"If you don't open the gates, we'll break them down," said one of the men.

"Do, if you dare," answered old Ramley, boldly; "and if you do, I'll shoot the best of you dead.—Bring me my gun, Tom.—Where's your warrant, young man? You are not an

officer, and you've got none with you, so I shan't let any boiled lobsters enter my yard, I can tell you."

By this time he was provided with the weapon he had sent for; and one of his men, similarly armed, had got into the cart beside him. The appearance of resistance was rather ominous, and the dragoons were well aware that if they did succeed in forcing an entrance, and blood were spilt, the whole responsibility would rest upon themselves, if no smuggled goods should be found, as they had neither warrant nor any officer of the Customs with them.

After a short consultation, then, he who had spoken before, called to old Ramley, saying, "We'll soon bring a warrant. Then look to yourself;" and, thus speaking, he rode off with his party. Old Ramley only laughed, however, and turned back into the house, where he made the party merry at the expense of the dragoons. All the men who had been out upon the expedition were now seated at the table, dividing the beef and bread amongst

them, and taking hearty draughts from the tankard. Not the least zealous in this occupation was Edward Ramley, who seemed to consider the deep gash upon his brow as a mere scratch, not worth talking about. He laughed and jested with the rest; and when they had demolished all that the board displayed, he turned to his father, saying, not in the most reverent tone, "Come, old fellow, after bringing our venture home safe, I think you ought to send round the true stuff: we've had beer enough. Let's have some of the Dutchman."

"That you shall, Neddy, my boy," answered the farmer, "only I wish you had shot that rascal you fired at. However, one can't always have a steady aim, especially with a fidgetty brute like that you ride;" and away he went to bring the hollands, which soon circulated very freely amongst the party, producing, in its course, various degrees of mirth and joviality, which speedily deviated into song. Some of the ditties that were sung were good, and some of them very bad; but almost all

were coarse, and the one that was least so was the following:—

SONG.

"It's wonderful, it's wonderful, is famous London town,
With its alleys
And its valleys,
And its houses up and down;
But I would give fair London town, its court, and all its people,
For the little town of Biddenden, with the moon above the steeple.

"It's wonderful, it's wonderful, to see what pretty faces
In London streets
A person meets
In very funny places;
But I wouldn't give for all the eyes in London town one sees,
A pair, that by the moonlight, looks out beneath the trees.

"It's wonderful, in London town, how soon a man may hold,
By art and sleight,
Or main and might,
A pretty sum of gold;
Yet give me but a pistol, and one rich squire or two,
A moonlight night, a yellow chaise, and the high road will do."

This was not the last song that was sung; but that which followed was interrupted by one of the pseudo-labourers coming in from the yard, to say that there was a hard knocking at the gate.

"I think it is Mr. Radford's voice," added the man, "but I'm not sure; and I did not like to get up into the cart to look."

"Run up stairs to the window, Jinny!" cried old Ramley, "and you'll soon see."

His daughter did, on this occasion, as she was bid, and soon called down from above, "It's old Radford, sure enough; but he's got two men with him!"

"It's all right, if he's there," said Jim Ramley; and the gates were opened in a minute, to give that excellent gentleman admission.

Now, Mr. Radford, it must be remembered, was a magistrate for the county of Kent; but his presence created neither alarm nor confusion in the house of the Ramleys; and when he entered, leaving his men in the court for a minute, he said, with a laugh, holding the father of that hopeful family by the arm, "I've

come to search, and to stop the others. Where are the goods?"

"Safe enough," answered the farmer. "No fear—no fear!"

"But can we look under the trap?" asked Mr. Radford, who seemed as well acquainted with the secrets of the place as the owner thereof.

"Ay, ay!" replied the old man. "Don't leave 'em too long—that's all."

"I'll go down myself," said Radford; "they've got scent of it, or I wouldn't find it out."

"All right—all right!" rejoined the other, in a low voice; and the magistrate, raising his tone, exclaimed, "Here, Clinch and Adams—you two fools! why don't you come in? They say there is nothing here; but we must search. We must not take any man's word; not to say that I doubt yours, Mr. Ramley; but it is necessary, you know."

"Oh, do what you like, sir," replied the farmer. "I don't care!"

A very respectable search was then commenced,

and pursued from room to room—one of the men who accompanied Mr. Radford, and who was an officer of the Customs, giving old Ramley a significant wink with his right eye as he passed, at which the other grinned. Indeed, had the whole matter not been very well understood between the great majority of both parties, it would have been no very pleasant or secure task for any three men in England to enter the kitchen of that farm-house on such an errand. At length, however, Mr. Radford and his companions returned to the kitchen, and the magistrate thought fit to walk somewhat out of his way towards the left-hand side of the room, when suddenly stopping, he exclaimed, in a grave tone, "Hallo! Ramley, what's here? These boards seem loose!"

"To be sure they are," answered the farmer; "that's the way to the old beer cellar. But there's nothing in it, upon my honour!"

"But we must look, Ramley, you know," said Mr. Radford. "Come, open it, whatever it is!"

"Oh, with all my heart," replied the man;

"but you'll perhaps break your head. That's your fault, not mine, however,"—and, advancing to the side of the room, he took a crooked bit of iron from his pocket—not unlike that used for pulling stones out of a horse's hoofs—and insinuating it between the skirting-board and the floor, soon raised the trap-door of which we have spoken before.

A vault of about nine feet deep was now exposed, with the top of a ladder leading into it; and Mr. Radford ordered the men who were with him to go down first. The one who had given old Ramley the wink in passing, descended without ceremony; but the other, who was also an officer, hesitated for a moment.

"Go down—go down, Clinch!" said Mr. Radford. "You *would* have a search, and so you shall do it thoroughly."

The man obeyed, and the magistrate paused a moment to speak with the smuggling farmer, saying, in a low voice, "I don't mind their knowing I'm your friend, Ramley. Let them think about that as they like. Indeed, I'd rather that they did see we understand each

other ; so give me a hint if they go too far ; I'll bear it out."

Thus saying, he descended into the cellar, and old Ramley stood gazing down upon the three from above, with his gaunt figure bending over the trap-door. At the end of a minute or two he called down, "There—that ought to do, I'm sure ! We can't be kept bothering here all day !"

Something was said in a low tone by one of the men below; but then the voice of Mr. Radford was heard, exclaiming, "No, no ; that will do ! We've had enough of it ! Go up, I say ! There's no use of irritating people by unreasonable suspicions, Mr. Clinch. Is it not quite enough, Adams ? Are you satisfied !"

"Oh ! quite, sir," answered the other officer ; there's nothing but bare walls and an empty beer barrel."

The next moment the party began to reappear from the trap, the officer Clinch coming up first, with a grave look, and Mr. Radford and the other following, with a smile upon their faces.

"There, all is clear enough," said Mr. Rad-

ford; "so you, gentlemen, can go and pursue your search elsewhere. I must remain here to wait for my son, whom I sent for to join me with the servants, as you know; not that I feared any resistance from you, Mr. Ramley; but smuggling is so sadly prevalent now-a-days, that one must be on one's guard, you know."

A horse laugh burst from the whole party round the table; and in the midst of it the two officers retired into the yard, where, mounting their horses, they opened the gates and rode away.

As soon as they were gone, Mr. Radford shook old Ramley familiarly by the hand, exclaiming, "This is the luckiest thing in the world, my good fellow! If I can but get them to accuse me of conniving at this job, it will be a piece of good fortune which does not often happen to a man."

Ramley, as well he might, looked a little confounded; but Mr. Radford drew him aside, and spoke to him for a quarter of an hour, in a voice raised hardly above a whisper. Numerous laughs, and nods, and signs of mutual under-

standing passed between them; and the conversation ended by Mr. Radford saying, aloud, "I wonder what can keep Dick so long; he ought to have been here before now! I sent over to him at eight; and it is past eleven."

CHAPTER XII.

We will now, by the reader's good leave, return for a short time to Harbourne House, where the party sat down to breakfast, at the inconveniently early hour of eight. I will not take upon myself to say that it might not be a quarter-of-an-hour later, for almost everything is after its time on this globe, and Harbourne House did not differ in this respect from all the rest of the world. From the face of young Radford towards the countenance of Sir Edward Digby shot some very furious glances as they took their places at the breakfast-table; but those looks gradually sunk down into a dull and sullen frown, as they met with no return. Sir Edward Digby, indeed,

seemed to have forgotten the words which had passed between them as soon as they had been uttered; and he laughed, and talked, and conversed with every one as gaily as if nothing had happened. Edith was some ten minutes behind the rest at the meal, and seemed even more depressed than the night before; but Zara had reserved a place for her at her own side; and taking the first opportunity, while the rest of the party were busily talking together, she whispered a few words in her ear. Sir Edward Digby saw her face brighten in a moment, and her eyes turn quickly towards himself; but he took no notice; and an interval of silence occurring the next moment, the conversation between the two sisters was interrupted.

During breakfast, a servant brought in a note and laid it on the side-board, and after the meal was over, Miss Croyland retired to her own room to make ready for her departure. Zara was about to follow; but good Mrs. Barbara, who had heard some sharp words pass between the two gentlemen, and had remarked the angry looks of young Radford,

was determined that they should not quarrel without the presence of ladies, and consequently called her youngest niece back, saying, in a whisper, "Stay here, my dear. I have a particular reason why I want you not to go."

"I will be back in a moment, my dear aunt," replied Zara; but the worthy old lady would not suffer her to depart; and the butler entering at that moment, called the attention of Richard Radford to the note which had been brought in some half-an-hour before, and which was, in fact, a sudden summons from his father.

The contents seemed to give him no great satisfaction; and, turning to the servant, he said, "Well, tell them to saddle my horse, and bring him round;" and as he spoke, he directed a frowning look towards the young baronet, as if he could scarcely refrain from shewing his anger till a fitting opportunity occurred for expressing it.

Digby, however, continued talking lightly with Zara Croyland, in the window, till the horse had been brought round, and the young man had taken leave of the rest of the party. Then

sauntering slowly out of the room, he passed through the hall door, to the side of Richard Radford's horse, just as the latter was mounting."

"Mr. Radford," he said, in a low tone, "you were pleased to make an impertinent observation upon my conduct, which led me to tell you what I think of yours. We were interrupted; but I dare say you must wish for further conversation with me. You can have it when and where you please."

"At three o'clock this afternoon, in the road straight from the back of the house," replied young Radford, in a low, determined tone, touching the hilt of his sword.

Sir Edward Digby nodded, and then turning on his heel, walked coolly into the house.

"I am sure, Sir Edward," cried Mrs. Barbara, as soon as she saw him, while Zara fixed her eyes somewhat anxiously upon his countenance—"I am sure you and Mr. Radford have been quarrelling."

"Oh no, my dear madam," replied Sir Edward Digby; "nothing of the kind, I can assure

you. Our words were very ordinary words, and perfectly civil, upon my word. We had no time to quarrel."

"My dear Sir Edward," said Sir Robert Croyland, "you must excuse me for saying it, I must have no such things here. I am a magistrate for this county, and bound by my oath to keep the peace. My sister tells me that high words passed between you and my young friend Radford before breakfast?"

"They were very few, Sir Robert," answered Digby, in a careless tone; "he thought fit to make an observation upon my saying a few words to your daughter, here, in a low tone, which I conceive every gentleman has a right to do to a fair lady. I told him, I thought his conduct insolent; and that was all that passed. I believe the youth has got a bad headache from too much of your good wine, Sir Robert; therefore, I forgive him. I dare say, he'll be sorry enough for what he said, before the day is over; and if he is not, I cannot help it."

"Well, well, if that's all, it is no great matter!" replied the master of the house;

"but here comes round the carriage; run and call Edith, Zara."

Before the young lady could quit the room, however, her sister appeared; and the only moment they obtained for private conference was at the door of the carriage, after Edith had got in, and while her father was giving some directions to the coachman. No great information could be given or received, indeed, for Sir Robert returned to the side of the vehicle immediately, bade his daughter good-bye, and the carriage rolled away.

As soon as it was gone, Sir Edward Digby proposed, with the permission of Sir Robert Croyland, to go out to shoot; for he did not wish to subject himself to any further cross-examination by the ladies of the family, and he read many inquiries in fair Zara's eyes, which he feared might be difficult to answer. Retiring, then, to put on a more fitting costume, while gamekeepers and dogs were summoned to attend him, he took the opportunity of writing a short letter, which he delivered to his servant to post, giving him, at the same

time, brief directions to meet him near the cottage of good Mrs. Clare, about half-past two, with the sword which the young officer usually wore when not on military service. Those orders were spoken in so ordinary and commonplace a tone that none but a very shrewd fellow would have discovered that anything was going forward different from the usual occurrences of the day; but Somers *was* a very shrewd fellow; and in a few minutes—judging from what he had observed while waiting on his master during dinner on the preceding day—he settled the whole matter entirely to his own satisfaction, thinking, according to the phraseology of those times, "Sir Edward will pink him—and a good thing too; but it will spoil sport here, I've a notion."

As he descended to the hall, in order to join the keepers and their four-footed coadjutors, the young baronet encountered Mrs. Barbara and her niece; and he perceived Zara's eyes instantly glance to his sword-belt, from which he had taken care to remove a weapon that could only be inconvenient to him in the sport he was

about to pursue. She was not so easily to be deceived as her father; but yet the absence of the weapon usually employed in those days, as the most efficacious for killing a fellow-creature, put her mind at ease, at least for the present; and, although she determined to watch the proceedings of the young baronet during the two or three following days—as far, at least, as propriety would permit—she took no further notice at the moment, being very anxious to prevent her good aunt from interfering more than necessary in the affairs of Sir Edward Digby.

Mrs. Barbara, indeed, was by no means well pleased that Sir Edward was going to deprive her schemes of the full benefit which might have accrued from his passing the whole of that day unoccupied, with Zara, at Harbourne House, and hinted significantly that she trusted if he did not find good sport he would return early, as her niece was very fond of a ride over the hills, only that she had no companion.

The poor girl coloured warmly, and the more so as Sir Edward could not refrain from a smile.

"I trust, then, I shall have the pleasure of

being your companion to-morrow, Miss Croyland," he said, turning to the young lady. "Why should we not ride over, and see your excellent uncle and your sister? I must certainly pay my respects to him; and if I may have the honour of escorting you, it will give double pleasure to my ride."

Zara Croyland was well aware that many a matter, which if treated seriously may become annoying—if not dangerous, can be carried lightly off by a gay and dashing jest: "Oh, with all my heart," she said; "only remember, Sir Edward, we must have plenty of servants with us, or else all the people in the country will say that you and I are going to be married; and as I never intend that such a saying should be verified, it will be as well to nip the pretty little blossom of gossip in the bud."

"It shall be all exactly as you please," replied the young officer, with a low bow and a meaning smile; but at the very same moment, Mrs. Barbara thought fit to reprove her niece, wondering how she could talk so sillily; and Sir Edward took his leave, receiving his host's excuses, as

he passed through the hall, for not accompanying him on his shooting expedition.

"The truth is, my dear sir," said Sir Robert Croyland, "that I am now too old and too heavy for such sports."

"You were kind enough to tell me, this is Liberty Hall," replied the young baronet, "and you shall see, my dear sir, that I take you at your word, both in regard to your game and your wine, being resolved, with your good permission, and for my own health, to kill your birds and spare your bottles."

"Certainly, certainly," answered the master of the mansion—"you shall do exactly as you like;" and with this licence, Sir Edward set out shooting, with tolerable success, till towards two o'clock, when, quite contrary to the advice and opinion of the gamekeepers—who declared that the dogs would have the wind with them in that direction, and that as the day was now hot, the birds would not lie a minute—he directed his course towards the back of Harbourne Wood, finding, it must be confessed, but very little sport. There, apparently fatigued and disgusted with

walking for a mile or two without a shot, he gave his gun to one of the men, and bade him take it back to the house, saying, he would follow speedily. As soon as he had seen them depart, he tracked round the edge of the wood, towards Mrs. Clare's cottage, exactly opposite to which he found his trusty servant, provided as he had directed.

Sir Edward then took the sword and fixed it in his belt, saying, "Now, Somers, you may go!"

"Certainly, sir," replied the man, touching his hat with a look of hesitation; but he added, a minute after, "you had better let me know where it's to be, sir, in case——"

"Well," rejoined Sir Edward Digby, with a smile, "you are an old soldier and no meddler, Somers; so that I will tell you, 'in case,'—that the place is in a straight line between this and Harbourne House. So now, face about to the right, and go back by the other road."

The man touched his hat again, and walked quickly away, while the young officer turned his steps up the road which he had followed during the preceding evening in pursuit of the two

Miss Croylands. It was a good broad open way, in which there was plenty of fencing room, and he thought to himself as he walked on, "I shall not be sorry to punish this young vagabond a little. I must see what sort of skill he has, and if possible wound him without hurting him much. If one could keep him to his bed for a fortnight, we should have the field more clear for our own campaign; but these things must always be a chance."

Thus meditating, and looking at his watch to see how much time he had to spare, Major Sir Edward Digby walked on till he came within sight of the garden wall and some of the outbuildings of Harbourne House. The reader, if he has paid attention, will remember that the road did not go straight to the back of the house itself: a smaller path, which led to the right, conducting thither; but as the gardens extended for nearly a quarter of a mile on that side, it followed the course of the wall to the left to join the parish road which ran in front of the mansion, leaving the green court, as it was called, or lawn, and the terrace, on the right hand.

As there was no other road in that direction, Sir Edward Digby felt sure that he must be on the ground appointed, but yet, as is the case in all moments of expectation, the time seemed so long, that when he saw the brick-work he took out his watch again, and found there were still five minutes to spare. He accordingly turned upon his steps, walking slowly back for about a quarter of a mile, and then returned, looking sharply out for his opponent, but seeing no one. He was now sure that the time must be past; but, resolved to afford young Radford every opportunity, he said to himself, "Watches may differ, and something may have detained him. I will give him a full half hour, and then if he does not come I shall understand the matter."

As soon, then, as he saw the walls once more, he wheeled round and re-trod his steps, then looked at his watch, and found that it was a quarter past three. "Too bad!" he said,—"too bad! The fellow cannot be coward, too, as well as blackguard. One turn more,

and then I've done with him." But as he advanced on his way towards the house, he suddenly perceived the flutter of female garments before him, and saying to himself, "This is awkward!" he gazed round for some path, in order to get out of the way for a moment, but could perceive none. The next instant, coming round a shrub which started forward a little before the rest of the trees, he saw the younger Miss Croyland advancing with a quick step, and, he could not help thinking, with a somewhat agitated air. Her colour was heightened, her eyes eagerly looking on; but, as soon as she saw him, she slackened her pace, and came forward in a more deliberate manner.

"Oh, Sir Edward!" she said, in a calm, sweet tone, "I am glad to see you. You have finished your shooting early, it seems."

"Why, the sport was beginning to slacken," answered Sir Edward Digby. "I had not had a shot for the last half hour, and so thought it best to give it up."

"Well then, you shall take a walk with

me," cried Zara, gaily. "I am just going down to a poor friend of ours, called Widow Clare, and you shall come too."

"What! notwithstanding all your sage and prudent apprehensions in regard to what people might say if we were seen alone together!" exclaimed Sir Edward Digby, with a smile.

"Oh! I don't mind that," answered Zara. "Great occasions, you know, Sir Edward, require decisive measures; and I assuredly want an escort through this terrible forest, to protect me from all the giants and enchanters it may contain."

Sir Edward Digby looked at his watch again, and saw that it wanted but two minutes to the half hour.

"Oh!" said Zara, affecting a look of pique, "if you have some important appointment, Sir Edward, it is another affair—only tell me if it be so?"

Sir Edward Digby took her hand in his: "I will tell you, dear lady," he replied, "if you will first tell me one thing, truly and sincerely—What brought you here?"

Zara trembled and coloured; for with the question put in so direct a shape, the agitation, which she had previously overcome, mastered her in turn, and she answered, "Don't, don't, or I shall cry."

"Well, then, tell me at least if I had anything to do with it?" asked the young baronet.

"Yes, you had!" replied Zara; "I can't tell a falsehood. But now, Sir Edward, don't, as most of you men would do, suppose that it's from any very tender interest in you, that I did this foolish thing. It was because I thought—I thought, if you were going to do what I imagined, it would be the very worst thing in the world for poor Edith."

"I shall only suppose that you are all that is kind and good," answered Digby—perhaps a little piqued at the indifference which she so studiously assumed; "and even if I thought, Miss Croyland, that you did take some interest in my poor self, depend upon it, I should not be inclined to go one step farther in the way of vanity than you yourself could wish. I am not

altogether a coxcomb. But now tell me, how you were led to suspect anything?"

"Promise me first," said Zara, "that this affair shall not take place. Indeed, indeed, Sir Edward, it must not, on every account!"

"There is not the slightest chance of any such thing," replied Sir Edward Digby. "You need not be under the slightest alarm."

"What! you do not mean to say," she exclaimed, with her cheeks glowing and her eyes raised to his face, "that you did not come here to fight him?"

"Not exactly," answered Sir Edward Digby, laughing; "but what I do mean to say, my dear young lady, is, that our friend is half an hour behind his time, and I am not disposed to give him another opportunity of keeping me waiting."

"And if he had been in time," cried Zara, clasping her hands together and casting down her eyes, "I should have been too late."

"But tell me," persisted Sir Edward Digby, "how you heard all this. Has my servant, Somers, been indiscreet?"

"No, no," replied Zara; "no, I can assure you! I saw you go out in your shooting dress, and without a sword. Then I thought it was all over, especially as you had the gamekeepers with you; but some time ago I found that your servant had gone out, carrying a sword under his arm, and had come straight up this road. That made me uneasy. When the gamekeepers came back without you, I was more uneasy still; but I could not get away from my aunt for a few minutes. When I could, however, I got my hat and cloak, and hurried away, knowing that you would not venture to fight in the presence of a woman. As I went out, all my worst fears were confirmed by seeing your servant come back without the sword; and then—not very well knowing, indeed, what I was to say or do—I hurried on as fast as possible. Now you have the whole story, and you must come away from this place."

"Very willingly," answered the young officer; adding, with a smile, "which way shall we go, Miss Croyland? To Widow Clare's?"

"No, no!" answered Zara, blushing again.

"Do not tease me. You do not know how soon, when a woman is agitated, she is made to weep. My father is out, indeed," she added, in a gayer tone, "so that I should have time to bathe my eyes before dinner, which will be half an hour later than usual; but I should not like my aunt to tell him that I have been taking a crying walk with Sir Edward Digby."

"Heaven forbid that I should ever give you cause for a tear!" answered the young baronet; and then, with a vague impression that he was doing something very like making love, he added, "but let us return to the house, or perhaps we may have your aunt seeking us."

"The most likely thing in the world," replied Zara; and taking their way back, they passed through the gardens and entered the house by one of the side doors.

CHAPTER XIII.

It was a custom of those days, I believe, not altogether done away with in the present times, for magistrates to assemble in petty sessions, or to meet at other times for the dispatch of any extraordinary business, in tavern, public-house, or inn—a custom more honoured in the breach than the observance, except where no other place of assembly can be found. It thus happened that, on the day of which we have been speaking, some half-dozen gentlemen, all justices of the peace for the county of Kent, were gathered together in a good-sized room of the inn, at the little town of * * * * * . There was a table drawn across the room, at which

was placed the magistrates' clerk, with sundry sheets of paper before him, several printed forms, and two books, one big and the other little. The magistrates themselves, however, were not seated in due state and dignity, but, on the contrary, were in general standing about and talking together, some looking out of the window into the street, some leaning with their backs against the table and the tails of their coats turned over their hands, while one occupied an arm-chair placed sideways at the board, with one knee thrown over the other—a favourite position which he could not have assumed had he sat with his face to the table.

The latter was Sir Robert Croyland, who had been sent for in haste by his brother justices, to take part in their proceedings relative to a daring act of smuggling which had just been perpetrated. Sir Robert would willingly have avoided giving his assistance upon this occasion; but the summons had been so urgent that he could not refuse going; and he was now not a little angry to find that there were more than sufficient justices present to make a quorum, and

to transact all the necessary business. Some one, however, it would seem, had—as usual in all county arrangements—been very busy in pressing for as full an attendance as possible; and those who knew the characters of the gentlemen assembled might have perceived that the great majority of them were not very well qualified to sit as judges upon a case of this nature, as almost every one was under suspicion of leaning towards the side of the smugglers, most of them having at some time engaged more or less in the traffic which they were called upon to stop.

Sir Robert Croyland was the least objectionable in this point of view; for he had always borne a very high name for impartiality in such matters, and had never had anything personally to do with the illicit traffic itself. It is probable, therefore, that he was sent for to give a mere show of justice to the proceedings; for Mr. Radford was expected to be there; and it was a common observation of the county gentlemen, that the latter could now lead Sir Robert as he liked. Mr. Radford, indeed, had not yet arrived, though two messengers had been des-

patched to summon him ; the answer still being that he had gone over towards Ashford. Sir Robert, therefore, sat in the midst—not harmonizing much in feeling with the rest, and looking anxiously for his friend's appearance, in order to obtain some hint as to how he was to act.

At length, a considerable noise was heard in the streets below, and a sort of constable door-keeper presented himself, to inform the magistrates that the officers and dragoons had arrived, bringing in several prisoners. An immediate bustle took place, the worshipful gentlemen beginning to seat themselves, and one of them—as it is technically termed—moving Sir Robert into the chair. In order to shew that this was really as well as metaphysically done, Sir Robert Croyland rose, sat down again, and wheeled himself round to the table. A signal was then given to the constable ; and a rush of several persons from without was made into the temporary justice room, which was at once nearly filled with custom-house officers, soldiers, smugglers, and the curious of the village.

Amongst the latter portion of the auditory,—

at least, so he supposed at first,—Sir Robert Croyland perceived his young friend, Richard Radford; and he was in the act of beckoning him to come up to the table, in order to inquire where his father was, and how soon he would return, when one of the officers of the Customs suddenly thrust the young gentleman out of the way, exclaiming, "Stand farther back! What are you pushing forward for? Your turn will come soon enough, I warrant."

Sir Robert Croyland was confounded; and for a moment or two he sat silent in perplexity and surprise. Not that he ever entertained a doubt of old Mr. Radford still nourishing all the propensities of his youth; nor that he was not well aware they had formed part of the inheritance of the son; but there were certain considerations of some weight which made Sir Robert feel that it would have been better for him to be in any other spot of the habitable globe than that where he was at the moment. Recovering himself, however, after a brief pause of anxious indecision, he made a sign to the constable door-keeper, and whis-

pered to him, as soon as the man reached his side, to inquire into the cause of Mr. Richard Radford's being there. The man was shrewd and quick, and while half the magistrates were speaking across the table to half the officers and some of the dragoons, he went and returned to and from the other side of the room, and then whispered to the baronet, "For smuggling, sir — caught abetting the others — his name marked upon some of the goods!"

Sir Robert Croyland was not naturally a brilliant man. Though hasty in temper in his early days, he had always been somewhat obtuse in intellect; but this was a case of emergency; and there is no greater sharpener of the wits than necessity. In an instant, he had formed his plan to gain time, which was his great object at that moment; and, taking out his watch, he laid it on the table, exclaiming aloud, "Gentlemen! gentlemen! a little regularity, if you please. My time is precious. I have an important engagement this afternoon, and I——"

But his whole scheme had nearly been frustrated by the impetuosity of young Radford

himself, who at once pushed through officers and soldiers, saying, "And so have I, Sir Robert, a very important engagement this afternoon. I claim to be heard as speedily as possible."

Sir Robert, however, was determined to carry his point, and to avoid having aught to do with the case of his young friend, even at the risk of giving him offence and annoyance. "Stand back, sir!" he said. "In this court, there is no friendship or favour. You will have attention in turn, but not before. Mr. Mowle, bring forward the prisoners one after the other, as near as possible, in the order of—the order of—of their capture," he added, at length, after hesitating for a moment to consider whether it was or was not probable that young Radford had been amongst those last taken; "and let all the others be removed, under guard, into the next room."

"Wont that make it a long affair, Sir Robert?" asked Mr. Runnington, a neighbouring squire.

"Oh dear, no!" replied the chairman; "by

regularity we shall save time. Do as you are directed, Mowle!"

Young Radford showed a strong disposition to resist, or, at least, to protest against this arrangement; but the officer to whom the baronet had spoken, treated the prisoner with very little reverence; and he, with the rest of the gang, was removed from the room, with the exception of three, one of whom, with a smart cockade in his hat, such as was worn at that time by military men in undress, swaggered up to the table with a bold air, as if he were about to address the magistrates.

"Ah, major, is that you?" asked a gentleman on Sir Robert's right, known in the country by the name of Squire Jollyboat, though his family being originally French, his real appellation was Jollivet.

"Oh yes, squire," answered the prisoner, in a gay, indifferent tone, "here I am. It is long since I have had the pleasure of seeing your worship. I think you were not on the bench the last time I was committed, or I should have fared better."

"I don't know that, major," replied the gentleman; "on the former occasion I gave you a month, I think."

"Ay, but the blackguards that time gave me two," rejoined the major.

"Because it was the second offence," said Squire Jollyboat.

"The second! Lord bless you, sir!" answered the major, with a look of cool contempt; and turning round with a wink to his two companions, they all three laughed joyously, as if it were the finest joke in the world.

It might not be very interesting to the reader were we to give in detail the depositions of the various witnesses upon a common case of smuggling in the last century, or to repeat all the various arguments which were bandied backwards and forwards between the magistrates, upon the true interpretation of the law, as expressed in the 9th George II., cap. 35. It was very evident, indeed, to the officers of Customs, to the serjeant of dragoons, and even to the prisoners themselves, that the worthy justices were disposed to take as favourable a view

of smuggling transactions as possible. But the law was very clear; the case was not less so; Mowle, the principal riding officer, was a straightforward, determined, and shrewd man; and although Sir Robert Croyland, simply with a view of protracting the investigation till Mr. Radford should arrive, started many questions which he left to the other magistrates to settle, yet in about half an hour the charge of smuggling, with riot, and armed resistance to the Custom-House officers, was clearly made out against the major and his two companions; and as the act left no discretion in such a case, the resistance raising the act to felony, all three were committed for trial, and the officers bound over to prosecute.

The men were then taken away, laughing and jesting; and Sir Robert Croyland looked with anxiety for the appearance of the next party; but two other men were now introduced without Richard Radford; and the worthy baronet was released for the time. The case brought forward against these prisoners differed from that against those who preceded them, inasmuch as no resist-

ance was charged. They had simply been found aiding and abetting in the carriage of the smuggled goods, and had fled when they found themselves pursued by the officers, though not fast enough to avoid capture. The facts were speedily proved, and, indeed, much more rapidly than suited the views of Sir Robert Croyland. He therefore raised the question, when the decision of the magistrates was about to be pronounced, whether this was the first or the second offence, affecting some remembrance of the face of one of the men. The officers, also, either really did recollect, or pretended to do so, that the person of whom he spoke had been convicted before; but the man himself positively denied it, and defied them to bring forward any proof. A long discussion thus commenced, and before it was terminated the baronet was relieved by the appearance of Mr. Radford himself, who entered booted and spurred, and covered with dust, as if just returned from a long ride.

Shaking hands with his brother magistrates, and especially with Sir Robert Croyland, he was about to seat himself at the end of

that table, when the baronet rose, saying, "Here, Radford, you had better take my place, as I must positively get home directly, having important business to transact."

"No, no, Sir Robert," replied that respectable magistrate, we cannot spare you in this case, nor can I take that place. My son, I hear, is charged with taking part in this affair; and some sharp words have been passing between myself and that scoundrel of a fellow called Clinch, the officer, who applied to me for aid in searching the Ramleys' house. When I agreed to go with him, and found out a very snug place for hiding, he was half afraid to go down; and yet, since then, he has thought fit to insinuate that I had something to do with the run, and did not conduct the search fairly."

The magistrates looked round to each other and smiled; and Radford himself laughed heartily, very much as if he was acting a part in a farce, without any hope or expectation of passing off his zeal in the affair, upon his fellow magistrates, as genuine. Mowle, the officer, at

the same time turned round, and spoke a few words to two men who had followed Mr. Radford into the room, one of whom shrugged his shoulders with a laugh, and said nothing, and the other replied eagerly, but in a low tone.

Sir Robert Croyland, however, urged the necessity of his going, put his watch in his pocket, and buttoned up his coat. But Mr. Radford, assuming a graver air and a very peculiar tone, replied, "No, no, Sir Robert; you must stay, indeed. We shall want you. Your known impartiality will give weight to our decisions, whatever they may be."

The baronet sat down again, but evidently with so much unwillingness, that his brethren marvelled not a little at this fresh instance of the influence which Mr. Radford exerted over his mind.

"Who is the next prisoner, Mr. Mowle?" demanded Sir Robert Croyland, as soon as he had resumed his seat.

"Mr. Richard Radford, I suppose, sir," said Mowle; "but these two men are not disposed of."

"Well, then," said Mr. Jollivet, who was very

well inclined to commence a career of lenity, "as no proof has been given that this is the second offence, I think we must send them both for a month. That seems to me the utmost we can do."

The other magistrates concurred in this decision; and the prisoners were ordered to be removed; but ere they went, the one against whom the officers had most seriously pressed their charge, turned round towards the bench, exclaiming, in a gay tone, "Thank you, Squire Jollyboat. Your worship shall have a chest of tea for this, before I'm out a fortnight."

A roar of laughter ran round the magistrates —for such matters were as indecently carried on in those days, on almost all occasions, as they sometimes are now; and in a moment or two after, young Radford was brought in, with a dark scowl upon his brow.

"How is this, Dick?" cried his father. "Have you been dabbling in a run, and suffered yourself to be caught?"

"Let these vagabonds make their accusation, and bring their witnesses," replied the

young man, sullenly, "and then I'll speak for myself."

"Well, your worships," said Mowle, coming forward, "the facts are simply these: I have long had information that goods were to be run about this time, and that Mr. Radford had some share in the matter. Last night, a large quantity of goods were landed in the Marsh, though I had been told it was to be near about Sandgate, or between that and Hythe, and was consequently on the look-out there. As soon as I got intimation, however, that the run had been effected, I got together as many men as I could, sent for a party of dragoons from Folkestone, and, knowing pretty well which way they would take, came across by Aldington, Broadoak and Kingsnorth, and then away by Singleton Green, towards Four-Elms, where, just under the hill, we came upon those two men who have just been convicted, and two others, who got off. We captured these two, and three horse-loads they had with them, for their beasts were tired, and they had lagged behind. There were two or three

chests of tea, and a good many other things. and all of them were marked, just like honest bales of goods, "Richard Radford, Esquire, Junior." As we found, however, that the great party was on before, we pursued them as far as Rouse-end, where we overtook them all; but there they scattered, some galloping off towards Gouldwell, as if they were going to the Ramleys; some towards Usher-house, and some by the wood towards Etchden. Four or five of the dragoons pushed after those running for Gouldwell, but I and the rest stuck to the main body, which went away towards the wood, and who showed fight. There was a good deal of firing amongst the trees, but not much damage done, except to my horse, who was shot in the shoulder. But just as we were chasing them out of the wood, up came Mr. Richard Radford, who was seen for a minute speaking to one of the men who were running, and riding along beside him for some way. He then turned, and came up to us, and tried to stop us as we were galloping after them, asking what the devil we were about, and

giving us a great deal of bad language. I didn't mind him, but rode on, knowing we could take him at any time; but Mr. Birchett, the other chief officer, who had captured the major a minute or two before, got angry, and caught him by the collar, charging him to surrender, when he instantly drew his sword, and threatened to run him through. One of the dragoons, however, knocked it out of his hand, and then he was taken. This affray in the middle of the road enabled the greater part of the rest to get off; and we only captured two more horses and one man."

Several of the other officers, and the dragoons, corroborated Mowle's testimony; and the magistrates, but especially Sir Robert Croyland, began to look exceedingly grave. Mr. Radford, however, only laughed, turning to his son, and asking, "Well, Dick! what have you to say to all this?"

Richard Radford, however, merely tossed up his head, and threw back his shoulders, without reply, till Sir Robert Croyland addressed him, saying, I hope, Mr. Radford, you can clear

yourself of this charge, for you ought to know that armed resistance to the King's officers is a transportable offence."

"I will speak to the magistrates," replied young Radford, "when I can speak freely, without all these people about me. As to the goods they mention, marked with my name, I know nothing about them."

"Do you wish to speak with the magistrates alone?" demanded old Mr. Radford.

"I must strongly object to any such proceeding," exclaimed Mowle.

"Pray, sir, meddle with what concerns you," said old Radford, turning upon him fiercely, "and do not pretend to dictate here. You gentlemen are greatly inclined to forget your place. I think that the room had better be cleared of all but the prisoner, Sir Robert."

The baronet bowed his head; Squire Jollivet concurred in the same opinion; and, though one or two of the others hesitated, they were ultimately overruled, and the room was cleared of all persons but the magistrates and the culprit.

Scarcely was this done, when, with a bold free air, and contemptuous smile, young Radford advanced to the side of the table, and laid his left hand firmly upon it; then, looking round from one to another, he said, "I will ask you a question, worshipful gentlemen.—Is there any one of you, here present, who has never, at any time, had anything to do with a smuggling affair?—Can you swear it upon your oaths?—Can you, sir?—Can you? Can you?"

The magistrates to whom he addressed himself, looked marvellously rueful, and replied not; and at last, turning to his father, he said, "Can you, sir? though I, methinks, need hardly ask the question."

"No, by Jove, Dick, I can't!" replied his father, laughing. "I wish to Heaven you wouldn't put such awful interrogatories; for I believe, for that matter, we are all in the same boat."

"Then I refuse," said young Radford, "to be judged by you. Settle the matter as you like.—Get out of the scrape as you can; but don't venture to convict a man when you are more guilty than he is himself. If you do, I may

tell a few tales that may not be satisfactory to any of you."

It had been remarked, that, in putting his questions, the young gentleman had entirely passed Sir Robert Croyland; and Mr. Jollivet whispered to the gentleman next him, "I think we had better leave him and Sir Robert to settle it, for I believe the baronet is quite clear of the scrape."

But Mr. Radford had overheard, and he exclaimed, "No, no; I think the matter is quite clear how we must proceed. There's not the slightest proof given that he knew anything about these goods being marked with his name, or that it was done by his authority. He was not with the men either, who were carrying the goods; and they were going quite away from his own dwelling. He happened to come there accidentally, just when the fray was going on. That I can prove, for I sent him a note this morning, telling him to join me at Ashford as fast as possible."

"I saw it delivered myself," said Sir Robert Croyland.

"To be sure," rejoined Mr. Radford; "and then, as to his talking to the smugglers when he did come up, I dare say he was telling them to surrender, or not to resist the law. Wasn't it so, Dick?"

"Not a bit of it," answered Richard Radford, boldly. "I told them to be off as fast as they could. But I did tell them not to fire any more. That's true enough!"

"Ay, to be sure," cried Mr. Radford. "He was trying to persuade them not to resist legitimate authority."

Almost all the magistrates burst into a fit of laughter; but, no way disconcerted, worthy Mr. Radford went on saying—"While he was doing this, up comes this fellow, Birchett, and seizes him by the collar; and, I dare say, he abused him into the bargain."

"He said I was a d—d smuggling blackguard myself," said young Radford.

"Well, then, gentlemen, is it at all wonderful that he drew his sword?" demanded his respectable father. "Is every gentleman in the county to be ridden over, rough-shod, by these officers and

their dragoons, and called 'd—d smuggling blackguards,' when they are actually engaged in persuading the smugglers not to fire? I promise you, my son shall bring an action against that fellow, Birchett, for an assault. It seems to me that the case is quite clear."

"It is, at all events, rendered doubtful," said Sir Robert Croyland, "by what has been suggested. I think the officers had better now be recalled; and, by your permission, I will put a few questions to them."

In a very few minutes the room was, once more, nearly filled, and the baronet addressed Mowle, in a grave tone, saying—"A very different view of this case has been afforded us, Mr. Mowle, from that which you gave just now. It is distinctly proved, and I myself can in some degree testify to the fact, that Mr. Radford was on the spot accidentally, having been sent for by his father to join him at Ashford——"

"At the Ramleys', I suppose you mean, sir," observed Mowle, drily.

"No, sir; at Ashford," rejoined Mr. Radford; and Sir Robert Croyland proceeded to say:

"The young gentleman also asserts that he was persuading the smugglers to submit to lawful authority, or, at all events, not to fire upon you. Was there any more firing after he came up?"

"No; there was not," answered Mowle. "They all galloped off as hard as they could."

"Corroborative proof of his statement," observed Sir Robert, solemnly. "The only question, therefore, remaining, seems to be, as to whether Mr. Radford, junior, had really anything to do with the placing of his name upon the goods. Now, one strong reason for supposing such not to be the case is, that they were not found near his house, or going towards it, but the contrary."

"Why, he's as much at home in the Ramleys' house as at his own," said a voice from behind; but Sir Robert took no notice, and proceeded to inquire—"Have you proof, Mr. Mowle, that he authorized any one to mark these goods with his name?"

Mr. Radford smiled; and Mowle, the officer, looked a little puzzled. At length, however, he

answered—"No, I can't say we have, Sir Robert; but one thing is very certain, it is not quite customary to ask for such proof in this stage of the business, and in the cases of inferior men."

"I am sorry to hear it," replied Sir Robert Croyland, in a dignified and sententious tone, "for it is quite necessary that in all cases the evidence should be clear and satisfactory to justify the magistrates in committing any man to prison, even for trial. In this instance nothing is proved, and not even a fair cause for suspicion made out. Mr. Radford was there accidentally; the goods were going in a different direction from his house; he was seized, we think upon insufficient grounds, while endeavouring to dissuade the smugglers from resisting the king's officers and troops; and though we may judge his opposition imprudent, it was not wholly unjustifiable. The prisoner is therefore discharged."

"The goods were going to the Ramleys," said the man, Clinch, who now, emboldened by the presence of several other officers, spoke loud

and decidedly. "Here are two or three of the dragoons, who can swear that they followed a party of the smugglers nearly to the house, and had the gates shut in their face when they came up; and I can't help saying, that the search of the house by Mr. Radford was not conducted as it ought to have been. The two officers were left without, while he went in to speak with old Ramley, and there were a dozen of men, or more, in the kitchen."

"Pooh! nonsense, fellow!" cried Mr. Radford, interrupting him with a laugh; "I did it for your own security."

"And then," continued Clinch, "when we had gone down into the concealed cellar below, which was as clear a *hide* for smuggled goods as ever was seen, he would not let me carry out the search, though I found that two places at the sides were hollow, and only covered with boards."

"Why, you vagabond, you were afraid of going down at all!" said Mr. Radford. "Where is Adams? He can bear witness of it."

"Clinch didn't seem to like it much, it must be

confessed," said Adams, without coming forward; "but, then, the place was so full of men, it was enough to frighten one."

"I wasn't frightened," rejoined Mr. Radford.

"Because it was clear enough that you and the Ramleys understood each other," answered Clinch, boldly.

"Pooh—pooh, nonsense!" said Squire Jollivet. "You must not talk such stuff here, Mr. Clinch. But, however that may be, the prisoner is discharged; and now, as I think we have no more business before us, we may all go home; for it's nearly five o'clock, and I, for one, want my dinner."

"Ay, it is nearly five o'clock," said young Radford, who had been standing with his eyes cast down and his brow knit; "and you do not know what you have all done, keeping me here in this way."

He added an oath, and then flung out of the room, passing through the crowd of officers and others, in his way towards the door, without waiting for his father, who had risen with the rest of the magistrates, and was preparing to depart.

Sir Robert Croyland and Mr. Radford descended the stairs of the inn together; and at the bottom, Mr. Radford shook the baronet heartily by the hand, saying, loud enough to be heard by everybody, "That was admirably well done, Sir Robert! Many thanks—many thanks."

"None to me, my dear sir," answered Sir Robert Croyland. "It was but simple justice;" and he turned away to mount his horse.

"Very pretty justice, indeed!" said Mowle, in a low voice, to the sergeant of dragoons; "but I can't help fancying there's something more under this than meets the eye. Mr. Radford isn't a gentleman who usually laughs at these matters so lightly. But if he thinks to cheat me, perhaps he may find himself mistaken."

In the meantime the baronet hastened homewards, putting his horse into a quick pace, and taking the nearest roads through the woods, which were then somewhat thickly scattered over that part of Kent. He had no servant with him; and when at about two miles from his own house, he passed through a wild and desolate part of the country, near what is now

called Chequer Tree, he looked on before and around him on every side, somewhat anxiously, as if he did not much admire the aspect of the place.

He pushed on, however, entered the wood, and rode rapidly down into a deep dell, which may still be seen in that neighbourhood, though its wild and gloomy character is now almost altogether lost. At that time, tall trees grew up round it on either hand, leaving, in the hollow, a little patch of about half an acre, filled with long grass and some stunted willows, while the head of a stream bubbling up in their shade, poured on its clear waters through a fringe of sedges and rushes towards some larger river.

The sun had yet an hour or two to run before his setting; but it was only at noon of a summer's day that his rays ever penetrated into that gloomy and secluded spot; and towards the evening it had a chilly and desolate aspect, which made one feel as if it were a place debarred for ever of the bright light of day. The green tints of spring, or the warmer brown of autumn, seemed to make no difference, for the shades

were always blue, dull and heavy, mingling with the thin filmy mist that rose up from the plashy ground on either side of the road.

A faint sort of shudder came over Sir Robert Croyland, probably from the damp air; and he urged his horse rapidly down the hill without any consideration for the beast's knees. He was spurring on towards the other side, as if eager to get out of it, when a voice was heard from amongst the trees, exclaiming, in a sad and melancholy tone, "Robert Croyland! Robert Croyland! what look you for here?"

The baronet turned on his saddle with a look of terror and anguish; but, instead of stopping, he dug his spurs into the horse's sides, and galloped up the opposite slope. As if irresistibly impelled to look at that which he dreaded, he gazed round twice as he ascended, and each time beheld, standing in the middle of the road, the same figure, wrapped in a large dark cloak, which he had seen when first the voice caught his ear. Each time he averted his eyes in an instant, and spurred on more furiously than ever. His accelerated pace soon carried

him to the top of the hill, where he could see over the trees ; and in about a quarter of an hour, he reached Halden, when he began to check his horse, and reasoned with himself on his own sensations. There was a great struggle in his mind ; but ere he arrived at Harbourne House he had gained sufficient mastery over himself to say, "What a strange thing imagination is!"

END OF VOL. I.

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